

Early Field Experiences Handbook

College of Education



UNIVERSITY OF
CENTRAL
ARKANSAS™

COLLEGE OF
EDUCATION

Purpose of Early Field Experience

Early Field Experiences are deliberately designed to expand and challenge personal and professional attitudes while providing growth opportunities for prospective and/or practicing teacher candidates. Observation and first-hand experience within community agencies and P-12 settings provide prospective teachers with information and tools that complement classroom study and assist in the development of pedagogical skills, knowledge, and dispositions necessary for effective teaching.

What is Field Experience?

Early field experiences involve activities done outside of class time to enhance the content being taught in that course. Early field experiences may include observing in a classroom setting; tutoring students; reading to students; assessing students' needs; volunteering in a community agency; providing targeted instruction for individuals or small groups; or providing whole-class instruction. If a course has a required field experience component, this expectation will be listed clearly in the course syllabus.

Liability Insurance & Field Waiver

The [Student Field Experience Waiver](#) describes the roles and purposes of field experiences, establishes the consequences of inappropriate conduct, and clarifies the risks and students' responsibilities for field experiences. This waiver releases all faculty, the College of Education, and the University of Central Arkansas, and those associated with the university (including cooperating teachers) from any legal action. Each student must sign this waiver before further coursework can be pursued. Students are encouraged to secure [personal teacher liability insurance](#) available through a variety of organizations. All candidates must read and confirm acceptance of the content of the Student Field Experience Waiver. Your instructor will provide the link to you as part of the course requirements. You may be asked to sign the waiver more than once if you are enrolled in multiple courses requiring an early field experience.

Mandated Reporter Training

This course has a required clinical (or field) component where you will be working with minors in school and/or community settings. Because of this component, you must submit to your course instructor documentation of the following mandatory clearances:

- Mandated Reporter Training - <https://ar.mandatedreporter.org/>

Background Checks

All students must have an approved criminal history background check before beginning any field experience. The process for this requirement is detailed at the site below:

- Background Check - <https://uca.edu/ocs/background-checks/internship-and-licensure/>

This process may take up to 4-6 weeks to complete. If a candidate is required to be in the field prior to the approval of this background check, the Student Connect background check may provide a quicker turnaround time as a temporary measure until the criminal history background check is approved. The Student Connect background check does not replace the criminal history background check. The criminal history background check is required for admission to any educator licensure program.

More information about the Student Connect background check is available at - <https://uca.edu/ocs/background-checks/internship-and-licensure/>

Policies Governing Field Experiences

Placement decisions are based upon availability of qualified supervisory personnel; range of experiences needed by the candidate; and recommendations from university faculty, district personnel officers, principals, and other candidates. Placements are generally determined by the range of grade levels required in the candidates' program and by the partnership agreements with the school district. Candidates may not request specific school placements and are never allowed to make their own arrangements for placement. Candidates may not be placed in any school their children attend nor where family members are employed. Candidates may not be placed in the high school from which they graduated for any early field placement. Once placements are made, no changes will be made unless deemed necessary by the Field Placement Coordinator, Department Chairs, or course instructors. (Policies in this handbook may or may not apply to EDUC 1300 concurrent credit courses taught on area high school campuses.)

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is of paramount importance during field experiences. Observations made or information gained about any P-12 students or P-12 teachers during field experiences is to be held in the strictest confidence. Ethical and legal considerations preclude revealing students' names, behaviors, or activities. Breaches of confidentiality may result in the candidate being removed from the placement site. Field experiences should not be discussed in such a way that would inform others of students' or cooperating teachers' names.

Diversity

The UCA College of Education requires that all candidates have experiences with K-12 students from diverse populations including students with exceptionalities, English Language Learners, students from various ethnic backgrounds, and students from various socioeconomic groups. Candidates will be assigned to a variety of placement sites while in the teacher education program.

Completion of Field Experience

It is the responsibility of the candidate to complete all field experience hours associated with a course. If the field experience hours are not completed, an "x" grade will be given for the course until the field hours are complete. The candidate has one semester from the time the "x" grade is given to complete the field hours, after that, the "x" grade is recorded as a failing grade ("F") for the course. A candidate must have a "C" or better in all major and professional education course work to graduate from the program.

Basic Candidate Expectations While in the Field

1. Candidates are to report to the principal's office every time they enter the building unless the principal has specifically made other arrangements. All sites have a sign-in protocol that you are expected to follow.
2. Punctuality and attendance are of utmost importance. Participants in field experiences are expected to arrive promptly for field experiences and remain on duty for the entire time designated for each session of the semester.
3. Candidates should park in the appropriate area. Many schools have designated parking places for visitors to park. Check with the office concerning this matter.
4. Candidates should dress professionally, be neatly groomed, and abide by that school's dress code. Jeans, short skirts, t-shirts, wind suits, athletic shoes, hats or caps, and shorts are inappropriate for those engaged in field experience. It should also be noted that excessive tattoos and excessive piercings are not permitted in most public schools.
5. Candidates should abide by all school policies and rules while visiting the school. Personal business such as telephone calls and personal visits may not be conducted during field experience hours. Cell phones may not be used. Tobacco, firearms, knives, or other weapons of any design are strictly prohibited.
6. Candidates should make every effort to enter the classroom before instruction begins, that is, before school, between classes, or during a break. Do not enter the classroom when class is in session unless the cooperating teacher has requested it.
7. The first responsibility of the cooperating teacher is the well-being of the students in the classroom. UCA candidates should be aware of the many demands made on the classroom teacher and should work around the teacher's schedule. It is the candidate's responsibility to seek the level of involvement expected by the university instructor and to interact positively with the teacher and students.
8. Field experience candidates are expected to fulfill course requirements assigned by the university instructor and approved by the mentor teacher. On the first visit, candidates

are to provide the cooperating teacher with appropriate forms and course requirements. The teacher must have a clear understanding of the field requirements for the course.

9. Candidates are there to observe, learn, and participate. Candidates are not there to evaluate or criticize.
10. Observations made or information gained about any K-12 student during field experiences is to be held in the strictest confidence. Ethical and legal considerations preclude revealing students' names, behaviors, or activities. When videotaping lessons, UCA candidates must follow the school's procedures for obtaining permission for such activity. Field experience should not be discussed in such a way that would inform others of names of students or faculty .
11. UCA candidates are not to become personally involved with the classroom students or site personnel with whom they work during field experience.
12. Candidates should remember that they are representatives of the University of Central Arkansas. Their behavior should be positive and highly professional at all times.
13. Candidates may be removed from field experience, or other actions taken, if it is determined that public school students are being negatively affected in any way. The actions taken may be at the request of the school district or the university.
14. In the event that a candidate must be absent, the candidate must notify the instructor and the cooperating teacher as early as possible. Sessions missed are to be rescheduled before the end of the semester, and these sessions must be arranged in advance with the mentor teacher at his/her convenience.