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Guidance for Educator Preparation Programs on Clinical Experiences and Certification Impacted by the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

March 30, 2020

Many candidates enrolled in registered educator preparation programs leading to teacher, school building leader, school district leader, school district business leader, school counselor, and school psychology certification have been impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency during the Spring 2020 academic term. In response, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) offers the following guidance. Additional guidance may be provided as the public health emergency evolves.

Clinical Experiences

Many candidates in educator preparation programs are facing challenges related to completing their school clinical experience placements during the spring of 2020. To the extent possible, we encourage institutions to continue to work with their candidates and with P-12 schools and cooperating teachers who continue to work with their students using various distance education methods and technologies, permitting candidates to complete their clinical experience via these distance education instructional methods wherever possible.

Educator preparation programs (EPPs) whose candidates are unable to complete their school clinical experience due to issues related to COVID-19 must develop and file a plan outlining the alternative models of clinical experiences the EPP will employ with their candidates to ensure that they receive a clinical experience that will help prepare them for future success as educators¹. In this alternative model, institutions must address the methods, technologies, and tools used to ensure that the candidates develop the expected knowledge and skills in order to enter the profession.

Clinical experiences include, but are not limited to:

- Student teaching, residencies or practica
- Field experiences prior to student teaching
- Transitional B and C mentored in-service component
- Leadership experiences
- School counseling and school psychology supervised internship hours

Alternative models may include, but are not limited to completing clinical simulations, analyzing videos of best practice focused on pedagogical core requirements in the broad areas of planning, instruction and data driven assessment, and/or assisting cooperating teachers with their remote or virtual learning. For example, while school districts are closed, P-12 teachers are expected to remain engaged with their

¹ Please note that some programs may need to comply with additional professional licensure or professional association accreditation or credentialing clinical experience requirements (e.g., school psychology).

students using distance education technology. Teacher candidates who already have a relationship with their cooperating teacher may also engage in that method of instruction, developing lesson plans and materials, posing questions about the material, and developing a means of assessing student learning.

Institutions with candidates whose clinical experience was impacted by COVID-19 in the spring of 2020 must file their alternative model plan(s) with NYSED's Office of College and University Evaluation (OCUE) by sending an email with "Alternative Model Plan" in the subject line; name of the institution; list of the programs (program name and program number) using the described alternative model; and narrative description of the alternative model that includes the methods, technologies, and tools used to ensure that the candidates develop the expected knowledge and skills during their clinical experience. Institutions may file one plan for multiple programs with similar clinical experience goals.

Please send the email with the alternative model plan(s) to OCUEdapps@nysed.gov by April 30, 2020. Please note that, while NYSED will not be approving or disapproving Alternative Model Plans, all institutions with candidates who are unable to complete their school clinical experiences are required to file their plan with NYSED. EPPs should use their best efforts to ensure that the clinical experience requirements of Parts 52 and 80 of the Commissioner's regulations are complied with to the greatest extent possible under these unprecedented circumstances.

edTPA

Many candidates in registered EPPs who attempted to complete their student teaching or similar clinical experience (e.g., residency, mentored in-service component) during the spring of 2020 may not be able to complete the edTPA in their placement due to issues related to COVID-19. In such cases, the candidate can be exempt from the edTPA and can take and pass the Assessment of Teaching Skills - Written (ATS-W) in lieu of the edTPA.

Candidates in registered EPPs whose student teaching or similar clinical experience in spring of 2020 was impacted by COVID-19 can take and pass either the ATS-W or edTPA to fulfill the teacher performance assessment requirement for teacher certification. Eligible candidates who still choose to take the edTPA, but do not pass it, could take and pass the ATS-W, or pursue the edTPA Multiple Measures Review Process (MMRP), if they qualify.

For candidates in registered EPPs to be eligible to take and pass the ATS-W in lieu of the edTPA, education deans or their appropriate designee must send a list of candidates whose student teaching or similar clinical experience in spring of 2020 was impacted by COVID-19 to the Office of Teaching Initiatives (OTI) at: otiaadmin@nysed.gov. Upon receipt of the information, OTI will make a note in the candidates' TEACH account that they are eligible to take and pass either the ATS-W or edTPA.

Certification Exams

The Department is also aware that all U.S.- and Canada-based Pearson VUE-owned test centers are currently closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. While they are closed until April 16, it is possible that they may need to remain closed for a longer period of time, depending on the evolving pandemic.

If we find that these test centers remain closed beyond May 1, 2020, the Department will exempt candidates in registered EPPs whose student teaching, leadership experience, or similar clinical

experience in spring of 2020 was impacted by COVID-19 from taking their certification exams. For the exemption, education deans or their appropriate designee would send a list of these candidates (see above reference to this list) to the Office of Teaching Initiatives (OTI) at: otiaadmin@nysed.gov.

Upon receipt of the information, OTI would make a note in the candidates' TEACH account that they are exempt from the certification exams, including candidates who already took, but did not pass, one or more exams. Those candidates exempt from the certification exams will be issued their respective certificate(s) upon completion of all other certification requirements.

Mentoring During the First Year of Employment

For those teacher candidates in registered EPPs whose student teaching or similar clinical experience in spring of 2020 was impacted by COVID-19, New York State school districts and BOCES that employ them should provide additional induction supports. These supports can include, but are not limited to: additional professional learning opportunities targeted toward appropriate pedagogical skills, additional mentoring and coaching, and where applicable, co-teaching assignments.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) Regarding the Guidance Last updated: March 30, 2020

Clinical Experiences

Q1. Which certificate titles are included in this guidance?

- A. All teacher, School Building Leader, School District Leader, School District Business Leader, School Counselor, and School Psychology certificate titles.

Q2. Which clinical experiences are addressed in this guidance?

- A. Student teaching, residencies, practica, field experiences prior to student teaching, Transitional B and C mentored in-service component, leadership experiences, and supervised internships for school counselors and school psychologists.

Q3. Will clinical experience requirements, including student teaching and educational leadership experience requirements, be waived?

- A. While the closure of P-12 school districts has prevented many candidates from completing their clinical experiences in a school, the Department expects institutions to develop plans for alternative models of clinical experiences that they will employ with their candidates to ensure that they receive a clinical experience that will help prepare them for future success as educators. Alternative models may include, but are not limited to completing clinical simulations, analyzing videos of best practice focused on pedagogical core requirements in the broad areas of planning, instruction and data driven assessment, and/or assisting cooperating teachers with their remote or virtual learning.

Q4. Our candidates switch grade levels mid-semester during the student teaching experience. How can we ensure that our candidates have the distribution of grade levels to meet program requirements?

- A. Section 52.21 of the Commissioner’s regulations require that the combination of field experiences and student teaching address the grade levels of the certificate sought. Institutions should use their professional discretion related to determining whether candidates have developed the expected knowledge and skills during their clinical experience and develop a plan for alternative models of clinical experiences to address the required grade level distributions. Examples may include, but are not limited to, having candidates view and evaluate previously recorded teaching videos, participate in online classroom simulations, and engage online with their respective cooperating teacher who continues to provide classroom instruction online.

Q5. Can candidates continue student teaching with their cooperating teachers through online learning and distance education technology platforms?

- A. Yes. During the current COVID-19 public health emergency, many schools have shifted to online learning platforms. Engaging with candidates under the guidance of cooperating teachers provides continuity of learning for both the student teacher candidate and the students.

Q6. What if the cooperating teacher does not choose to include the candidate in his/her online teaching?

- A. While cooperating teachers should be encouraged to continue to work with and develop their student teacher, this may not be practicable in all circumstances. The EPP faculty should take these circumstances into account when developing the plan for their student teachers. Examples may include, but are not limited to, having candidates view and evaluate previously recorded teaching videos and participate in online classroom simulations.

Q7. The guidance says that plans must be “filed” with the Department. What does this mean? Will SED be approving or disapproving the plans?

- A. Institutions that are experiencing challenges with meeting candidate school placement days/hours this semester are required to develop plans for how they will provide alternative clinical experiences and file them with NYSED. NYSED will not be approving/disapproving those plans. The plans are required to be filed so that we can document that all institutions impacted by the COVID-19 crisis have, in fact, developed a plan that provides candidates with an alternative model of clinical experiences and addresses interruptions in their placements.

School Counselor and School Psychologist Placements

Q8. Our school counseling and school psychologist candidates, who are in their senior year, are unable to complete their hours due to the closures of their school placements. How can we keep them on track to graduate?

- A. The Commissioner’s regulations require a college supervised internship in both school counselor and school psychologist programs. The institution may develop and implement an alternative model of clinical experiences, such as virtual/online activities and interactions, completing clinical simulations, and analyzing videos of best practice. The program should also ensure it is consistent with any additional professional licensure or professional association accreditation or credentialing requirements that might apply.

Certification Exams

Q9. My candidates no longer have access to their student teaching placements and are unable to complete their edTPA. Will the edTPA requirement be waived?

- A. Candidates in registered EPPs whose student teaching or similar clinical experience in spring of 2020 was impacted by COVID-19 can take and pass either the ATS-W or edTPA to fulfill the teacher performance assessment requirement for teacher certification. Eligible candidates who still choose to take the edTPA, but do not pass it, could take and pass the ATS-W, or pursue the edTPA Multiple Measures Review Process (MMRP), if they qualify.

For candidates in registered EPPs to be eligible to take and pass the ATS-W in lieu of the edTPA, education deans or their appropriate designee must send a list of candidates whose student teaching or similar clinical experience in spring of 2020 was impacted by COVID-19 to the Office of Teaching Initiatives (OTI) at: otiaadmin@nysed.gov. Upon receipt of the information, OTI will make a note in the candidates' TEACH account that they are eligible to take and pass either the ATS-W or edTPA.

Q10. The testing centers are closed during the COVID-19 emergency and will likely be backlogged once they can open again. How should we advise our candidates?

- A. All U.S.- and Canada-based Pearson VUE-owned test centers are currently closed due to the COVID-19 public health emergency until April 16th. If we find that these test centers remain closed beyond May 1, 2020, the Department will exempt candidates in registered EPPs whose student teaching, leadership experience, or similar clinical experience in spring of 2020 was impacted by COVID-19 from taking their certification exams (e.g., Educating All Students test, edTPA/ATS-W, Content Specialty Tests, School Building Leader assessment, School District Leader assessment).

For the exemption, education deans or their appropriate designee would send a list of these candidates to the Office of Teaching Initiatives (OTI) at: otiaadmin@nysed.gov. Upon receipt of the information, OTI would make a note in the candidates' TEACH account that they are exempt from the certification exams, including candidates who already took, but did not pass, one or more exams.

DASA Training

Q11. We can no longer offer our Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) requirement in-person. How can our candidates meet the DASA requirement?

- A. All approved DASA training providers, and institutions of higher education that include the DASA training in their educator preparation program curricula, may provide the DASA training entirely online during the time period of the State of emergency declared by the Governor pursuant to an Executive Order for the COVID-19 Crisis.