

**University of Massachusetts Amherst
Secondary Teacher Education Program Science
EDUC 592S Pre-Practicum Guide**

Introduction

Welcome to the official guide to the Pre-Practicum experience. This guidebook includes information that provides a foundation for successful completion of Pre-Practicum and smooth transition to the final Student Teaching Experience. All Pre-Practicum students are responsible for reading and following all policies, procedures and requirements stated in this guidebook.

Pre-Practicum Description

The Pre-Practicum is a two credit mandatory Pass/Fail course taken (with a few exceptions) at the same time as the STEP subject matter methods course. STEP students participate in a “Clinical Year” which is a two-semester sequence of Pre-Practicum and Student Teaching experiences. The first semester consists of a 4-6 hour per week Pre-Practicum. This is followed by the second semester of Student Teaching normally in the same department and often with the same Pre-Practicum Sponsoring Teacher.

Pre-Practicum Goals

Students will:

1. Experience being in a school and subject matter appropriate classroom for a semester
2. Experience schooling from the perspective of a teacher
3. Gain experience and reflect on what it is like to be a beginning teacher
4. Grow and develop as a teacher
5. Build a developmental foundation for student teaching
6. Be a positive resource for teaching and learning at a school

Pre-Practicum Objectives

Students will:

1. Observe and work with a wide range of students
2. Participate in non-direct instructional work and the management of the classroom
3. Participate in grading and gain exposure to the complexities of grading
4. Experience planning, teaching, and assessing
5. Develop a variety of instructional methods and the ability to adapt them to changing circumstances of adolescents in a school context.
6. Be responsive to Massachusetts and appropriate professional organization guidelines.

Basic Requirements

1. For the semester, Pre-Practicum students are expected to be in the schools, twice a week (not one full day), for a minimum of 2 hours each time (minimum total of 4 hours per week). It is anticipated that the first one or two weeks of the semester will be used to set up the Pre-Practicum experience, so the number of weeks in the schools will be 11-12 depending on the semester length.

2. Students can expect to attend a minimum of four cohort (group) meetings with the Pre-Practicum Facilitator to discuss and reflect on the Pre-Practicum. These will be arranged by the appropriate Pre-Practicum Facilitator.
3. Specific assignments and experiences (developed by methods faculty) are outlined in a separate, subject matter specific Pre-Practicum syllabus. They may include:
 - a. Subject specific teaching assignments responsive to professional organizational guidelines
 - b. Technology-related assignment(s)
 - c. Special education-related assignment(s)
 - d. Following a hypothetical student schedule or shadowing a student
 - e. An assignment that allows students to meet other school personnel, both professional and nonprofessional
 - f. Participate in an email journal
 - g. Weekly goal setting and self-assessment

Pre-Practicum Roles

All Pre-Practicum students will work with a “Sponsoring Teacher” for Pre-Practicum. The Sponsoring Teacher has taught for at least one year and serves as a mentor for the Pre-Practicum experience. Since students are only in the school for 4-6 hours per week, time with the Sponsoring Teacher may be limited, however students and Sponsoring Teachers should strive to hold meaningful discussions concerning the progress of the Pre-Practicum.

The following semester, Pre-Practicum students will normally remain at the school for Student Teaching. Students will work with a “Cooperating Teacher”. A Cooperating Teacher must have taught for three years and have “professional status” and hold certification in the subject and at the level for which the student is seeking certification. In some cases, the Cooperating Teacher will be the same person who served as the Pre-Practicum Sponsoring Teacher. Some students will need to find a different teacher in the same department with whom to work because the Sponsoring Teacher hasn’t taught enough years to gain professional status or for some other reason. Other students may need to find a different school for Student Teaching. Such a change is subject to approval of the appropriate Subject Matter Advisor and Clinical Faculty Pre-Practicum Facilitator.

The Sponsoring Teacher will:

1. Incorporate the STEP student into the classroom activities as appropriate
2. Provide feedback and collaborate with the student to monitor Pre-Practicum progress
3. Share views on planning, teaching, assessing, classroom management, etc.
4. Assist in increasing the student’s responsibilities over the course of the semester
5. Discuss and sign the Pre-Practicum Performance Assessment Form (PPPA) at midterm and end of Pre-Practicum

The STEP Pre-Practicum Student will:

1. Discuss Pre-Practicum Guides and Subject Matter Syllabus with Sponsoring Teacher
2. Apply to the school for Pre-Practicum Placement,
3. Complete and submit to the Prepracticum Coordinator: Pre-Practicum Placement Contract, and the Sponsoring Teacher Form.
4. Complete the Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) form at the school (if required)
5. Learn school rules and regulations relevant to Pre-Practicum work
6. Inform (in a timely fashion) the Sponsoring Teacher if there is an emergency and you will not be able to keep the scheduled hours
7. Inform and arrange with the Sponsoring Teacher to do methods-related assignments
8. Attend scheduled meetings with methods course cohort group
9. Contribute weekly email journal reflections
10. Keep weekly log and evidence of pre-practicum work
11. Complete the prepracticum assessment.

Schedule and Agreement

By the end of the third week of the Pre-Practicum, students and their Sponsoring Teachers should have formalized in writing, the terms of the Pre-Practicum. Sponsoring teachers and students may work out their own planning system. An example of a planning table is below. This is only an example and is not a mandatory form to use, the important concept here is that an agreed upon, mutual expectation be set early on. This important agreement can be revised if necessary as the semester progresses. Students should make a copy of the agreement for the Pre-Practicum facilitator.

SAMPLE				
	Dates and times I will be working at the school	The classes I will be working in	My role in these classes will be	The plan for maintaining good communication and receiving feedback from my sponsoring teacher is
Weeks 1-3				
Weeks 4-5				
Weeks 6-9				
Weeks 9-11				
Weeks 11-13				

Pre-Practicum and Methods Course

The Pre-Practicum and Subject Matter Methods Courses are intertwined. The Pre-Practicum Facilitator is a member of the methods course teaching team and will conduct a minimum of four meetings during the course of the semester to review and reflect on the Pre-Practicum. Because of the amount of material each methods course must cover, these Pre-Practicum meetings will be scheduled at another time.

The Methods Course Pre-Practicum Facilitator will:

1. Read and support reflective email journaling and/or other formative performance assessment processes
2. Facilitate cohort meetings during the semester
3. In collaboration with candidates, monitor Pre-Practicum progress
4. Maintain contact with sponsoring teachers
5. Assist in resolving individual Pre-Practicum problems
6. Provide Subject Methods Faculty with relevant Pre-Practicum data
7. Work with the Sponsoring Teacher to complete the Practicum Performance Assessment Form
8. Sign Student Teaching Application Form subject to successful completion of Pre-Practicum and passing score on MTEL subject matter test

The Methods Course Faculty will:

1. Provide copies of methods course syllabus for Sponsoring Teachers
2. Communicate regularly with Pre-Practicum Facilitators
3. Review with Pre-Practicum Facilitator each candidate's readiness for Student Teaching
4. Sign Student Teaching Application Form subject to successful completion of Pre-Practicum and passing score on MTEL subject matter test

Performance Assessment and Reflective Writing

The Pre-Practicum moves forward in one of five ways:

1. The student will be asked to remain at the school site with the same Sponsoring Teacher who will then be designated as a Cooperating Teacher for Student Teaching.
2. The student will be asked to remain at the school site but be asked to find a different Cooperating Teacher for Student Teaching.
3. The student will be asked to find a different school site for Student Teaching with approval of the Subject Methods Advisor.
4. The student will be asked to complete an additional semester of Pre-Practicum at the same or different school site prior to proceeding on to Student Teaching.
5. The student will be asked to leave the program.

In each case, the decision for proceeding in one of the five ways will be made by the Sponsoring Teacher, Clinical Faculty, Subject Methods Advisor, and the student.

The STEP Clinical Year

The Secondary Teacher Education Program (STEP) is a program of the School of Education's Department of Teacher Education and Curriculum Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst. STEP, in cooperation with colleagues in the Arts and Sciences, prepares middle and high school teachers in English, History and the Political Sciences, Mathematics, the Sciences, and World Languages at the middle and high school level. Our program includes solid subject matter preparation, professional course work, and a sequential series of pre-practicum field experiences culminating in a student teaching practicum semester.

The Pre-Practicum has been developed by STEP faculty and clinical faculty in collaboration with faculty and administrators from our partnership schools in the following districts: Amherst; Easthampton; East Longmeadow; Greenfield; Holyoke; Longmeadow; Springfield; and Great Falls/Turners Falls. The requirements for this experience are built around the School of Education and STEP goals, the National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (NCATE) guidelines, the standards outlined by subject matter professional organizations, and the Massachusetts' Department of Education (DOE) Professional Standards for Teachers as listed in the regulations for Licensing of Educational Personnel.