Standard 3. Field Experiences and Clinical Practice

The unit and its school partners design, implement, and evaluate field experiences and clinical practice so that teacher candidates and other school professionals develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn.

3.1 Field Experiences and Clinical Practice

How does the unit work with the school partners to deliver field experiences and clinical practice to enable candidates to develop the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to help all students learn? [10,000 characters]

The Professional Education Unit (PEU) works with partners to design, deliver and evaluate field/clinical experiences to help pre-professional candidates (PPC) develop and deepen understanding of key attributes and knowledge as outlined in the conceptual framework: “Learning to Teach – Teaching to Learn” (Overview exhibit I.5.c.8 NW Conceptual Framework). Candidates, clinical, and university faculty contribute to program quality and the assessment of professional dispositions. Governance resides with the Council on Teacher Education (COTE), comprised of representatives from the PEU and school partners. Candidates self-assess through reflections and video; clinical faculty provide feedback on decision-making, learner behavior, and instructional processes; faculty and clinical supervisors complete disposition forms on candidates. The PEU’s commitment to collaboration is evidenced by relationships developed with schools in northwest Missouri, Kansas City, and Omaha. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlines responsibilities (ex. 3.4.a.6 MOU Form). The Direct and Periodic Involvement Forms list faculty involvement (ex. 3.4.a.5 Direct/Periodic Involvement by PEU) and the Northwest Missouri Regional Professional Development Center (RPDC) provides professional development opportunities on critical topics (Standard 5 ex. 5.4.G.3 RPDC Trainings Calendar).

Introductory Field Experiences (Practicum I): Taken prior to admission to the Professional Education Program (PEP), this field experience introduces potential candidates to the profession through field observation and experiences with diversity of learners, schools and districts, multiple instructional styles, technology use, curriculum, and classroom management. Cooperating teachers (CT) provide opportunities for candidates to tutor, assist with projects and read stories to help candidates understand initial skills, roles, and responsibilities impacting student learning. CTs complete a mini-disposition on potential candidates. Elementary majors log 15 contact hours in classrooms in the Horace Mann Laboratory School. Middle and secondary candidates complete 24 hours. Observations and beginning instruction on elements of the Teacher Work Sample (TWS) form the basis of weekly discussions and written reflections (ex. 3.4.f.13 TWS Guidelines).

Mid-Level Field Experiences: These field experiences occur after admission to the professional education program (PEP). Candidates receive mentoring from high quality CTs at schools with long-standing relationships to the university. They are expected to be punctual, act responsibly, dress professionally, demonstrate a positive attitude and maintain confidentiality (ex. 3.4.F.7 Mini Ed. Cand. Disposition Inventory). Elementary candidates experience 5 hours of guided literacy instruction, complete 60 hours of supervised small group/whole class instruction, and complete another 60 hours of seminar and preparation time. Elementary candidates also complete 60 hours of supervised instruction in math, science, and social studies with an
additional 30 hours of seminars and preparation. Candidates who double major in Elementary and Cross Categorical/Special Education complete an additional practicum for 30 hours of student contact with a total of 90 hours of planning and teaching. Those who minor in Early Childhood Education take a 70-hour practicum—30 hours infants and toddlers, and 40 hours preschool children.

Middle school majors complete two mid-level practicums of 24 hours of observation/participation and a 90-hour practicum in Middle School Curriculum, Methods, and Practicum. Candidates have opportunities to tutor students and assist with assignments and projects, as well as teach at least 5 lessons. They learn more about the instructional process as they complete elements of the TWS. Mid-level experiences provide opportunities that further develop teaching skills that directly impact student learning.

Secondary education majors complete 40 hours in department-assigned experiences and an intensive week-long practicum during which they spend each day with an assigned CT in a pre-student teaching situation. Candidates have opportunities to assist with assignments and projects, plan and teach lessons and complete elements of the TWS.

**Student Teaching**: The culminating field experience for candidates consists of a 16-week student teaching experience facilitated by the PEU’s Director of Field Experiences and partner schools. Placements include a variety of diverse populations; students with exceptionalities; students from varied socio-economic settings; students living in rural, suburban and urban districts; and students from a wide divergence of racial and ethnic backgrounds. As all need experiences with divergent student populations, diversity of previous field experiences is considered as placements are made. Candidates may also apply to take 8 weeks of student teaching abroad.

The Director of Field Experience works with district contacts to find good matches between districts, cooperating teachers and candidates (ex. 3.4.c.3 Criteria for Clinical Faculty); in fact, some districts interview candidates prior to selection for classroom placements to help ensure a positive match. Depending on areas of certification and participation in the co-teaching pilot, split placements may be in the same or different classrooms/grade levels. Candidates participating in the co-teaching pilot are placed in 1 classroom for the 16 weeks of student teaching. Other candidates may be placed in 2 8-week placements to give them experience with different ages. Early childhood education candidates do one placement preschool/kindergarten and one in elementary; middle school candidates are placed in 2 areas of certification; and those seeking K-12 certification in areas like music, physical education, art, and special education split placements to meet DESE requirements. Secondary candidates are usually placed in a single classroom for 16 weeks, while students enrolled in Graduate Internships for Student Teaching (GIST) may be in half-day placements for the full 16-week period or full day placements for 8 weeks.

Training opportunities for CTs and university supervisors are held at the beginning of each term on Northwest’s main campus, in Kansas City and Omaha sites, and at individual schools as needed (ex. 3.4.c.1 Coop. Teacher and ex. 3.4.c.9 Univ. Supervisor Training). The university collaborates with other universities to provide training for co-teaching (exhibit 3.4.e.1 Co-Teaching Handbook). During the first visit to each PPC’s classroom, the university supervisor
provides orientation to cooperating teachers and reviews responsibilities. University supervisors maintain weekly contact and conduct 4+ formative evaluations with the CT to provide feedback and support. They meet at the end of the placement to discuss the summative evaluation and the PPC’s grade (ex. 3.4.e.13 St. Teaching Handbook).

During student teaching, candidates are observed and evaluated by their CT, university supervisor, and content advisor (as appropriate). The CT and university supervisor complete formative, summative, and disposition evaluations and hold conferences for each candidates (ex. 3.4.f.11 St Teaching Formative and ex. 3.4.f.12 Summative Eval forms). Candidates self-report dispositions and complete a self-evaluative reflection (ex. 3.4.f.3 Ed. Cand. Disposition Inventory). They also complete surveys on the performance of their cooperating teacher(s), university supervisor, and their preparation for student teaching. Survey results are used as part of the continuous improvement process to determine if changes are needed (ex. 3.4.d.3 Coop. Teacher and 3.4.d.8 Univ. Supervisor Eval data). Candidates must complete the 5-day TWS unit demonstrating their ability to impact P-12 student learning (exhibit 3.4.f.13 TWS Guidelines), and as part of this process all elements must be passed before they are deemed to have successfully completed their student teaching assignment(s). All candidates placed within 250 miles of campus return for 2 days of professional development during student teaching. Any concerns during student teaching are passed through the university supervisor, Director of Field Experience and the Assistant Director of Teacher Education; the complaint process follows university policy.

Advanced programs: Advanced program course syllabi and professional portfolios reflect a variety of field experiences which are aligned with the PEU conceptual frameworks and professional standards (exhibit 3.4.f Portfolio rubrics and Overview 1.5.c.8 NW Conceptual Framework). Graduate faculty participate in the selection of external sites for field experiences and internship placements. Other school professional candidates complete field experiences in the endorsement area while candidates enrolled in advanced programs in the PEU must design, conduct and report on a research project which impacts student learning and improves instruction in classrooms or school districts.

Other School Professionals: Capstone field experiences for students in principal, superintendent, and guidance preparation programs at the master’s and specialist’s levels were collaboratively developed by faculty from Northwest’s Departments of Professional Education and Behavioral Sciences (respectively) and representatives from regional school districts. Coursework is aligned with standards from the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium, Missouri Standards for School Leaders, and feedback from field practitioners. Candidates work with advisors to select internship locations for 90 hours of practicum. Candidates in School Guidance and Counseling participate in 300 hours of supervised counseling experiences in an elementary school, secondary school or related setting to develop, practice, demonstrate, and refine counseling competencies (Standard 1 ex. 1.4.a Ad. Prog. Narratives).