

**The University of
Southern Mississippi
Professional Education Unit**

**Policies and Procedures
Manual**



The Standard of Excellence
in Teacher Preparation

Policy and Procedures Manual

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SECTION I. INTRODUCTION TO PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

This Manual, containing policies and procedures pertaining to the Professional Education Unit (Unit) at The University of Southern Mississippi (USM), has been approved by the Professional Education Council (PEC), Dean of the College of Education and Psychology (CoEP), Provost, and President. Additionally, this document contains, as an appendix, the Bylaws of the Professional Education Council. It is to be used by faculty, advisers, chairs, and deans to address questions concerning professional education.

This manual is grouped into four sections. Section 1 contains basic information regarding CoEP Dean's Office personnel who serve the Unit, NCATE/CAEP, definitions, governance, and mission of the Unit. Sections 2 and 3 contain policies and procedures regarding faculty and programs in the Unit. Section 4 includes selected policies and procedures from the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) that relate to the Unit.

Any additions, corrections, or changes to the Manual may be directed through PEC representative(s) from each college. Unless mandated by the MDE, changes to this Manual must receive a simple majority vote from the PEC before being forwarded to the Dean of CoEP. If a policy or procedure is unclear, please contact the Dean of CoEP for clarification.

This edition will remain in effect until a new edition is released, with sections or pages revised and updated as needed. Professional Education Faculty (PEF) will receive all new and revised material, and are responsible for reviewing and applying the information immediately.

DEAN'S OFFICE COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY

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ACCREDITATION

The Professional Education Unit at The University of Southern Mississippi is currently accredited by the [National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education](#) (NCATE). This accreditation covers initial licensure educator preparation programs, advanced licensure educator preparation programs, and the preparation of other school professional programs on both the Hattiesburg and Gulf Park campuses. The University of Southern Mississippi is a charter member of NCATE, and has been continuously accredited since 1954.

On July 1, 2013, the [Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation](#) (CAEP) became the new, sole accreditor for educator preparation providers as a result of the de facto consolidation of NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC). The last NCATE accreditation visit for Southern Miss was in March 2012. The next Southern Miss site visit will be completed by CAEP in Spring 2019. Until spring 2019, Southern Miss holds NCATE accreditation. After successful completion of a standards compliance report (self-study) and a site visit, Southern Miss will become CAEP accredited.

The mission of both NCATE and CAEP is accountability and improvement of educator preparation. The accreditation process establishes rigorous standards for educator preparation programs and holds accredited institutions accountable for providing continuous evidence of meeting these standards.

Many educator preparation programs are also nationally recognized by their applicable Specialized Professional Association (SPA).

Contact Information:

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education/Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation
1140 19th Street, NW
Suite 400
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 223-0077
Fax: (202) 296-6620

The programs are also accredited through the [Mississippi Department of Education](#) (MDE) following the Mississippi Educator Preparation Program Accreditation (MEPPA) Review.

Contact Information:

Mississippi Department of Education
Office of Educator Licensure
Central High School Building
359 North West Street
P. O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771
601-359-3513

DEFINITION OF THE UNIT

The Unit for USM includes PEF, academic programs, and administrative offices associated with professional education. PEF and academic programs are housed in the [College of Arts and Letters](#), [College of Education and Psychology](#), [College of Health](#), and [College of Science and Technology](#). Twelve academic departments within the four colleges offer educator preparation programs leading to 20 initial certification areas. Eight academic departments within the four colleges offer 20 graduate programs leading to advanced licensure or the preparation of other school professionals. For a listing of all programs, refer to <https://www.usm.edu/education-psychology/licensure-programs>.

GOVERNANCE OF THE UNIT

The PEC is the official governance body for the Unit. The Unit head, the Dean of CoEP, has the responsibility and authority to provide direction and leadership to the PEC. The purpose of PEC is to ensure that professional education programs are quality programs that comply with the standards of NCATE/CAEP, other accrediting agencies, and the [MDE](#). Membership on the PEC includes faculty representatives from each department housing educator preparation programs, representatives from [Educational Field Experiences \(EFE\)](#), and CoEP Dean's Office personnel that serve the Unit. The PEC recommends actions regarding the development, administration, evaluation, and revision of educator preparation courses and programs.

MISSION STATEMENT OF THE UNIT

Faculty, staff, and candidates within the Unit at USM collaborate to generate, disseminate, and apply knowledge to improve the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Building on the distinctive heritage of our University as a normal college, we prepare our candidates to engage in creative, bold, and determined actions that positively influence a culturally diverse, global community.

The Unit's Conceptual Framework is consistent with the University's historical roots as a normal college, its mission, and its future. The University, since its founding in 1910, has been committed to the exemplary preparation of teachers, counselors, administrators, and other school personnel. In accordance with this history and the present vision and mission of the University, the Unit is committed to improving the educational attainment of the citizens of Mississippi and, in turn, the economic development of our state. Therefore, the mission of the Unit is fivefold: a) prepare high quality teachers and education leaders for our state; b) conduct innovative, relevant research that informs decision-making in education; c) establish strong relationships with local school districts and the MDE to improve education in our state, d) promote a healthier populace; and e) enhance cultural understanding among our citizens.

SECTION II. PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FACULTY

DEFINITION

PEF at USM are individuals, including graduate teaching assistants, who teach one or more courses in education (adjunct, part-time, clinical, full-time, and full-time tenure track faculty), provide services to candidates (e.g., advising), supervise clinical experiences, and/or administer some portion of the Unit.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF ADJUNCT, PART-TIME, CLINICAL, FULL-TIME, AND FULL-TIME TENURE TRACK PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FACULTY

USM, and thereby the Unit, follows guidelines established by USM and the [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools \(SACS\)](#) to hire faculty and assign course responsibilities based on appropriate faculty credentials. Faculty, (whether adjunct, part-time, clinical, full-time, or full-time tenure track faculty) qualifications are reviewed by department chairs and are in compliance with [SACS](#) requirements. PEF with responsibilities for graduate teaching and administration have earned and are granted Graduate Faculty status as designated by the USM Graduate Council. Graduate students' qualifications to teach or supervise field experiences are based on formal study, experience, and training. USM Institutional Research ([IR](#)) compiles faculty credentials for inclusion in University faculty rosters. The Roster for Professional Education Faculty cross-references teacher education courses with instructors' qualifications. Qualifications and expectations of PEF are listed below:

1. PEF have appropriate credentials and/or have exceptional expertise in their discipline to qualify them for their assignments. USM requires at least three years teaching/appropriate professional experience with early childhood, elementary, middle school, and/or secondary students.
2. PEF are knowledgeable about best practices related to the use of technology and integrate these in their teaching and scholarship. They are knowledgeable about and have experience with teaching and learning, including cultural differences and exceptionailities and their instructional implications. They exhibit knowledge and sensitivity related to critical issues, (e.g., how content studies and pedagogical studies can be more effectively integrated, the ethics of equity and diversity in U.S. culture, etc.).
3. PEF are expected to be actively involved with the professional world of practice in P-12 schools and engaged in dialog regarding the design and delivery of instructional programs.
4. PEF are expected to be actively involved and maintain memberships in professional associations, and provide education-related services at the local, state, national, and/or international levels in their areas of expertise and assignment.
5. PEF are expected to conduct and/or support innovative, relevant research that informs decision-making in education.

Exceptions to these criteria may be considered for faculty whose sole responsibility is to advise students.

Those who supervise field experiences have had preparation for this role and have had professional experiences in school settings. Graduate students who teach or supervise field experiences are qualified in terms of formal study, experience, and training.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Professional development is ongoing and expected of PEF at Southern Miss. Professional development activities could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- professional conferences
- webinars
- workshops/lectures related to professional education
- teleconferences
- re-assigned time to work with a P-12 teacher/school (teaching a class, working with students, setting up a new program/course, etc.)
- other activities deemed appropriate by the department chair

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF SCHOOL-BASED FACULTY

- The contract signed by school district partners and USM ensures that school-based faculty (cooperating teachers) are appropriately licensed. It requires cooperating teachers to:
 - 1) have a standard teaching license,
 - 2) be a full-time employee in a cooperating district,
 - 3) have three consecutive years of positive teaching evaluations,
 - 4) positively impact student learning,
 - 5) be teaching in his/her field of licensure,
 - 6) have successfully completed the Unit's Cooperating Teacher Workshop, and
 - 7) voluntarily accept the responsibilities of a cooperating teacher (i.e., observing, collaborating, critiquing, and evaluating candidates).
- Additionally, cooperating teachers are required to complete training to prepare them for the role of mentor. The Verification of Training Form lists educational background, certification areas, NBPTS certification, training date, P-12 experience, demographics, and current district/school of each cooperating teacher.

The Unit maintains a database of cooperating teacher records and qualifications in Tk20 maintained by the Educational Placement Specialist in EFE.

HIRING AND EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION FACULTY

The process for hiring, annual evaluation, tenure, and promotion of PEF follows the policies outlined in (1) the *USM Faculty Handbook*, (2) the faculty member's assigned college and department, and (3) this Manual. Recommendations are executed in the faculty member's assigned department and college. For PEF, the Dean of CoEP can consult with the respective dean in the College of Arts and Letters, College of Health, and College of Science and Technology when there are concerns regarding hiring, annual evaluation, pre-tenure assessment, or tenure and promotion decisions.

ANNUAL EVALUATION

PEF members follow University procedures for preparing and submitting dossiers for annual evaluation. If concerns emerge as a result of the annual evaluation, the Dean of CoEP can meet with the faculty member's department chair and college dean to discuss the concerns. If necessary, the Dean of CoEP and the faculty member's department chair and college dean will design a plan for remediation, a schedule for compliance, and a recommended schedule for subsequent review.

TENURE AND PROMOTION

The recommendation for tenure and promotion is executed within the faculty member's department and follows guidelines outlined in the *USM Faculty Handbook* and the faculty member's departmental tenure and promotion documents. If concerns exist, the Dean of CoEP can review the faculty member's pre-tenure and/or tenure dossiers and, if necessary, confer with the dean of the college in which the faculty member is assigned. The Dean of CoEP writes a letter to the Provost only if he/she does not concur with the recommendation from the faculty member's college.

NON-CONTINUATION

Options:

Departments/schools typically have three options for a faculty member who receives a recommendation for non-continuation: (1) temporarily reassign faculty member's professional education responsibilities while working on remediation; (2) reassign the faculty member in the department and recommend another faculty member for PEF designation; or (3) replace the faculty member.

Emergency Recommendations for Non-Continuation:

If the Dean of CoEP has reason to believe a PEF member's performance represents an immediate threat to the quality of the program, an immediate review can be requested outside the usual channels of the annual review

process. The Dean of CoEP initiates an emergency review and requests information/materials as indicated by the particular situation. The Dean of CoEP meets with the faculty member's department chair and college dean to make a determination about continuation. Appeal of a recommendation for non-continuation as a PEF must be delivered to the Provost within 10 working days of receipt of the non-continuation decision.

APPEALS

Faculty who wish to appeal a recommendation for dismissal from PEF after annual evaluation, pre-tenure assessment, or tenure and/or promotion evaluations should follow the appeals procedures delineated in the *USM Faculty Handbook*. Appeal of a recommendation for non-continuation as a PEF must be delivered to the Provost within 10 working days of receipt of the non-continuation decision.

ANNUAL EVALUATION AND RETENTION OF PART-TIME FACULTY AND GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Department chairs review part-time PEF and Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) on an annual basis. Furthermore, all courses taught by part-time faculty and GTAs are evaluated by their students using the system currently in place at the University (i.e., student evaluations of teaching). Syllabi for all courses taught by part-time faculty are reviewed each semester by the department chair. The syllabi are maintained in Tk20 under the NCATE documents room tab.

The Dean of CoEP can call for an immediate review of part-time faculty or GTAs if there is question about performance and can request information/materials as indicated by the particular situation. The Dean of CoEP meets with the faculty member's or GTA's department chair to make a determination about continuation. Appeal of a recommendation for non-continuation as a PEF must be delivered to the Provost within 10 working days of receipt of the non-continuation decision.

TRAINING AND MENTORING OF ADJUNCT FACULTY AND TEACHING ASSISTANTS

- Graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) and adjunct faculty must be mentored by appropriate members of the PEF.
- If inexperienced, GTAs or adjunct faculty must "shadow" their mentors for a semester (i.e., sit in classes, assist in grading, etc.) prior to being assigned their own class.
- GTAs or adjunct faculty must use departmental syllabi or ones approved by their mentors or department chair.
- Mentors will make periodic class visitations to observe the GTA's or adjunct's teaching and engage in regular consultations with their mentee.
- Those GTAs and adjunct faculty who are experienced will be evaluated annually.

TEACHING LOADS

Workload policies and practices for faculty at USM, including PEF, enable faculty to invest quality time in teaching, research, and service. The Faculty Handbook describes Instructional and Research Policies and Support Services, and tenure and promotion guidelines are also outlined.

The undergraduate teaching load for full-time tenure-track faculty members for fall and spring semesters is four courses or 12 credit hours per semester, or the equivalent. For faculty members engaged in research, one course or three semester hours is reassigned to allow faculty members time for research. Therefore, the teaching load for research-active faculty is three courses or nine credit hours per semester, or the equivalent. Independent study is considered part of a faculty member's teaching load. Teaching during summer semester is optional for faculty. If a faculty member chooses to teach in the summer, three courses or nine credit hours, or the equivalent, is considered a full teaching load.

Clinical faculty and instructors focus on the teaching mission; the teaching load for these faculty members is four courses or 12 credit hours per semester. The supervision of clinical practice is considered full-time or the equivalent of 12 credit hours for every 18 students supervised.

Faculty load includes professional service. PEF provide University service through University committees and Unit service through PEC; PEC sub-committees, caucuses, and ad hoc committees; professional development and consultation in P-12 schools; and participation in MDE and IHL initiatives.

At times, faculty members are assigned administrative duties and assume the responsibilities of a program coordinator. In those cases, the faculty workload is negotiated with the department chair and college dean.

CAUCUSES

The PEC has three caucuses composed of representatives from each program leading to licensure.

- Elementary Education Caucus, whose purpose is to provide a forum for all faculty interested in elementary education issues to discuss and make recommendations to the PEC.
- K-12/Secondary Caucus, whose purpose is to provide a forum for all faculty interested in K- 12/secondary issues to discuss and make recommendations to the PEC.
- Graduate Caucus, whose purpose is to provide a forum for all faculty interested in graduate issues in education to discuss and make recommendations to the PEC.

The Executive Committee recommends to the CoEP Dean individuals to appoint as caucus chairs prior to the first PEC meeting of each academic year. Caucus chairs do not have to be regular voting members of the PEC. Each caucus shall meet at least one time in both fall and spring semesters and at other times as deemed necessary by caucus chairs and/or members. The calendar of caucus meetings must be distributed to PEC members by the October meeting of each academic year. Caucus agendas must be distributed, and minutes of each meeting must be submitted to the PEC Secretary within two weeks of the caucus meeting.

SECTION III. PROGRAMS IN PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION

ADMISSION TO UNDERGRADUATE, INITIAL LICENSURE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The Gold Card serves as documentation that a student has met all admission requirements and has been officially admitted into an undergraduate, initial licensure teacher preparation program within the Professional Education Unit at The University of Southern Mississippi.

The following requirements must be met for the Gold Card:

- Completion of a core curriculum of pre-major coursework
- A minimum grade point average of 2.75 on the 44 semester-hour core curriculum of pre-major coursework
- A grade of "C" or better in freshman English Composition I and II
- Good academic standing at Southern Miss (a student on probation, probation continued, or suspension status cannot be admitted to teacher education until the transcript reflects good academic standing)
- A clear background check via www.certifiedbackground.com, the system currently selected by the Southern Miss Professional Education Council. Students who pass the background check process will be issued a background check badge.
- All candidates must subscribe to the Tk20 assessment system. Tk20 provides an electronic portfolio and storage system for students as well as tracks, stores, retrieves, and analyzes data for accreditation purposes.
- Successful completion of a nationally normed ability/achievement assessment OR a teacher education normed entrance test:

Nationally Normed Ability/Achievement Assessment: An ACT composite score of 21 or higher. If the student did not take the ACT, an equivalent SAT score of 1060 or above satisfies requirements as well.

Teacher Education Normed Test: Acceptable scores on the Core Academic Skills for Educator Test (CORE): Reading Test Code 5712 with a score of at least 156, Writing Test Code 5722 with a score of at least 162, and Mathematics Test Code 5732 with a score of at least 150. This is the most recent teacher-normed test approved by the State of Mississippi. MDE will begin accepting this test

9/1/2013 with it becoming mandatory as the new test starting 1/1/2014.

Except for the Background Check that allows for a two-week extension into the first semester (see Background Check Policy), all requirements must be met prior to enrollment in restricted teacher education courses.

Any student with a question about these requirements should be directed to the College of Education and Psychology Dean.

ADVISEMENT

The Unit considers advisement for candidates essential to student success. PEF meet with candidates during advisement in October and March. Students are made aware of advisement through University-wide communication, the [academic calendar](#), and notices from advisors, departments, and colleges. Candidates can seek advisement and mentoring from PEF at any time during the academic year. PEF are available through email and scheduled office hours. Class rosters in SOAR, Blackboard, and Tk20 are linked to students' email for effective group communication.

Advisement is an important part of any PEF member's job. All students considering a major in professional education are assigned to a PEF adviser as soon as possible, but no later than the semester they are admitted to professional education. The Certification Officer meets each semester with all advisers to inform them of changes, policy, etc.

BACKGROUND CHECK

Adopted Fall 2009: Beginning fall 2009, all students at The University of Southern Mississippi who apply for admission to teacher education must undergo a background check. Students who apply for a Gold Card and have passed the background checking process are eligible for admission to teacher education, pending satisfaction of other admission requirements. Students who pass the background check process will be issued a Background Check badge and must be able to produce the badge when visiting P-12 schools. Teacher candidates issued Gold Cards prior to fall 2009 and currently enrolled in Southern Miss teacher education programs, as well as Southern Miss students enrolled in teacher education field or clinical experiences that do not require a Gold Card also undergo a background check as part of University policy.

Amended Fall 2010: Teacher candidates who received Gold Cards prior to fall 2009 and are currently enrolled in the teacher education program, as well as other students at The University of Southern Mississippi who are sent into P-12 schools as a part of University coursework, must undergo a background check. Therefore, any student who is sent into a P-12 school to complete observation, methods, practicum, or student teaching requirements must complete the background check process.

Amended Fall 2012: It is crucial for students to initiate the background check process no later than the first week of the semester because it takes approximately one week to receive background check results.

Amended Fall 2013, no background check requests will be processed after the second week of the semester. Students that fail to meet the second week deadline will be forced to drop classes that require a background check.

DISMISSAL, APPEALS, AND REMEDIATION COMMITTEE (DAR)

Academic department chairs may direct students to file complaints specific to teacher education to the Dismissal, Appeals, and Remediation (DAR) Committee. As noted in [PEC Bylaws](#), the DAR Committee is responsible for hearing appeals of students denied admission to professional education or student teaching and/or removed from the professional education program.

Students file a formal request to the DAR Committee by completing required paperwork obtained in the Certification Licensure Office. The DAR Committee reviews the request and makes a recommendation to the Unit head for final approval. The student is contacted with the decision. Records of all complaints are maintained in the CoEP Dean's office with the original copies filed in the student's curriculum folder in the Certification Licensure Office.

SECTION IV. MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION POLICIES

CERTIFICATION OFFICER

The Certification Officer is located in OMH 121 (Dean's Student Services Office); the phone number is 601-266-5522. The Certification Officer:

- disseminates information regarding USM's requirements for initial and advanced licensure;
- evaluates transcripts of individual students who have completed a bachelor's degree, non-teaching, who now wish to pursue a licensure program in education;
- awards Gold Card to students completing admission requirements
- recommends students to MDE for 101 license
- serves as liaison between USM, MDE, and local education personnel regarding all areas and levels of licensure;
- processes all Mississippi licenses.

During the Professional Development Seminar held between first and second student teaching experiences, the Certification Officer outlines the procedures for applying for a teaching license. The Certification Officer discusses the Educator Licensure Management System (ELMS), the online license application process used by MDE for traditional teacher education graduates. Using ELMS, the Certification Officer recommends each teacher education program completer for licensure. Once the recommendations have been submitted, each graduate must complete the following steps to apply for a teaching license:

1. set up an ELMS account and file an online application through the MDE website at www.mde.k12.ms.us.
2. submit an official transcript from the Registrar's office at USM to MDE.
3. ensure Praxis test results have been received by MDE.