Alternate Route Licensure Programs at The University of Southern Mississippi

Program Handbook
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Preface & Graduate Bulletin

This handbook clarifies policies, guidelines and expectations for Alternate Route Teacher candidates (henceforth, candidates). This handbook is a resource for candidates, school-based mentors, school-based administrators, university faculty, and university supervisors. It is designed to give additional information beyond the policies and procedures outlined in the University of Southern Mississippi’s Graduate Bulletin. Candidates should refer to both the Bulletin and this document for guidance. Effort has been made to avoid overlap between the two documents, so it is important for candidates to be informed about both. If you have additional questions, please contact the program coordinator or your program advisor.

The current Graduate Bulletin can be found at: http://catalog.usm.edu

The University of Southern Mississippi offers to all persons equal access to educational, programmatic and employment opportunities without regard to age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, gender identity, genetic information, religion, race, color, national origin, and/or veteran status pursuant to applicable state and federal law.
Founded in 1910, The University of Southern Mississippi opened its doors as a small teachers’ college. Today, the University has grown into a comprehensive doctoral and research-driven institution with a proud history and an eye on the future.

With a diverse student body of approximately 15,000 students representing 74 foreign countries, all regions of the United States and every corner of Mississippi, we celebrate diversity in every sense of the word.

Not only is Southern Miss a haven for the arts, but the University maintains a tradition of success in both academics and athletics, offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in more than 180 programs through six degree-granting colleges. A dual-campus university, Southern Miss serves students on campuses in Hattiesburg and Long Beach, in addition to five teaching and research sites in Mississippi and Online at Southern Miss.

Source: https://www.usm.edu/about/about-southern-miss
College of Education and Human Sciences

College Statement

Students, faculty, and staff in the College of Education and Human Sciences are committed to

- learning and its value for individuals, families, communities, and society;
- an inclusive environment that reflects and respects diversity of people and ideas;
- success for all students based on holistic and contextual supports;
- high quality teaching, research, and service that merits respect from one’s peers;
- personal integrity, individual responsibility, and a demonstrated work ethic;
- professional collaboration that maximizes both resources and results;
- a positive work environment that promotes and supports individual and collective professional growth, recognition, and success; and
- educational attainment for the citizens of Mississippi and beyond and the resulting impact on quality of life and economic development.

Vision

By capitalizing on its unique academic composition and commitment to excellence, the College of Education and Human Sciences will be the primary choice for regional, national, and international undergraduate and graduate students that meet high standards for admission and graduation in each of our programs. Our academic programs will recruit, retain, and graduate students representing diverse groups and at rates that represent the top quartile nationally. Academic programs in the College of Education and Human Sciences will provide transformative educational experiences to ensure that graduates possess the necessary knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions to be successful and to positively influence a culturally diverse, global community.

Mission

Building on the distinctive heritage of our University as a normal college, the College of Education and Human Sciences has expanded its mission to prepare not only successful professional educators but also influential researchers, mental health and human service professionals, and information specialists. The College 1) delivers high quality teaching that transforms the lives of students, 2) generates and disseminates knowledge through research that impacts societal needs, and 3) engages in professional service that multiplies the effects of both teaching and research. The College of Education and Psychology provides a student experience characterized by student support that fosters success, provides exposure to diversity of people and ideas, includes active engagement in research, offers quality practicum and internship experiences, and provides opportunities for professional service.

Source: https://www.usm.edu/education-human-sciences/college-statementvisionmission
Mississippi Department of Education

Candidates should note at the outset of their program that the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) is the state agency in charge of teacher licensure. Program faculty are obligated to follow the MDE’s rules and guidelines which are subject to change. Southern Miss recommends candidates for licensure but has no role in the actual issuance of the license. While the program faculty strive to stay current with changes in MDE rules and guidelines, it is ultimately the candidate’s responsibility to stay informed about state policy governing alternate route licensure. Candidates should understand that Southern Miss will not send test scores, transcripts, or other files to MDE on the candidate’s behalf. With the exception of the program verification provided by USM’s licensure official, the candidate is responsible for ensuring that everything required for licensure is provided to MDE.

Information about the Mississippi Department of Education can be found by visiting: https://www.mdek12.org
Approved Secondary (7-12) Subject Areas at USM

USM supports alternate route licensure for 14 subject areas. Licensure will be for grades 7-12 unless the chosen subject area is K-12 only (P.E., for example). The candidate will declare his/her subject area through submission of Praxis II Subject Area Assessment results during the application process. If the candidate has taken more than one Praxis II Subject Area Assessment, he/she should notify the Program Coordinator of their declared subject area and any additional endorsement areas prior to submission of program verification forms to the Mississippi Department of Education.

Approved subject areas include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Licensure Content Area (Grades 7-12)</th>
<th>Praxis II Test Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art</td>
<td>5134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>5235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Education</td>
<td>5101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>5245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Arts</td>
<td>5038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>5174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Education</td>
<td>5551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Economics</td>
<td>5122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Media Specialist</td>
<td>5311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>5161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>5091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>5265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>5081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>5195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Alternate Route Licensure Programs

Overview of Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Degree Program

The Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program is a licensure option for students who wish to teach in a secondary content area while also earning a Master’s degree. Candidates successfully completing this 33-credit hour degree program earn a Master’s degree in education.

While MAT candidates may enter the program fall, spring, or summer semester, it is the three (3) licensure courses taken during the summer (the courses are only offered in the summer) that lead to initial licensure. Students must earn a B or better in each of the three courses. After successful completion of the summer courses, the Alternate Route Program Coordinator notifies USM’s licensure official to log into the MDE’s licensure system and place a program verification form in the system on behalf of the candidate. The program verification allows the candidate to apply for a 3-year, nonrenewable, alternate route teaching license in the candidate’s endorsed subject areas. With the 3-year, nonrenewable, teaching license, the candidate can pursue certified employment as a teacher in a Mississippi school with a new teacher orientation program as early as the school year following the summer coursework.

During the first year of teaching, MAT candidates will complete two semesters of supervised internship as a paid, certified employee in a Mississippi school district. If these two semesters of supervised internship go well, USM, with cooperation from the candidate’s school district and USM’s licensure official, will recommend the candidate for the 5-year, renewable, alternate route teaching license. The Mississippi Department of Education requires one full year of successful teaching in an endorsed subject area to earn the 5-year, renewable, alternate route teaching license (also called a “standard” license).

MAT candidates should understand that USM does not guarantee to meet the licensure requirements of states other than Mississippi. Candidates will be responsible for verifying that their program of study meets their desired state’s licensure requirements.

There are four distinct differences between the TMI program and the MAT program that make the MAT the preferred choice by most of our students:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>MAT</th>
<th>TMI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Support for 1st Full Year of Teaching</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In-depth Development of Teaching Knowledge</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Master’s Level Teacher Pay Upon Completion</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Federal &amp; State Financial Aid Available</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **Support for a Full Year:** Instead of USM faculty observing candidates for one semester during the teaching internship, as in the TMI program, USM faculty continue to observe
and support MAT candidates for two full semesters, the first full year of teaching. The first year of teaching is challenging for all teachers; additional support usually proves invaluable.

2. **Development of Knowledge and Skills with 18 hours of Coursework:** In addition to the two semesters (one full school year) of observation and support, students in the MAT program gain a wealth of knowledge and skills that provide them with a solid foundation for a long career in education. The MAT program also prepares teacher candidates who may wish to consider more advanced degrees in education.

3. **Master’s Level Teacher Pay:** MAT graduates emerge with a full Master’s degree and are certified at the Class AA level. Teachers holding Master’s degrees are paid by most districts at the Master’s level. The result is increased pay.

4. **Financial Aid:** Because the MAT program is degree-granting, MAT candidates are eligible for financial aid from state and federal sources. In some geographic areas and for some subject areas, financial assistance may include grants, loan forgiveness, moving expenses, and incentives.

Admissions for the MAT program are held three times a year. Each year, the deadline to apply for summer admission is around May 15, the deadline to apply for fall admission is around August 15, and the deadline to apply for spring admission is around January 15. Official deadlines are posted to the program website.

**Overview of Teach Mississippi Institute (TMI) Certificate Program**

The Teach Mississippi Institute (TMI) is a certificate program available to students who wish to teach in a secondary content area without earning an additional degree. It is a 12-credit hour certificate-only program. The TMI program is recommended for those applicants who already have some teaching experience (i.e., private school experience, active military duty with experience as an instructor, college-level teaching experience). The TMI program is the simplest route to meeting the requirements of the [Mississippi Department of Education](https://www.mde.state.ms.us/) (MDE) for alternate route teacher licensure.

The TMI program begins by taking three courses in summer (the courses are only offered in the summer). Students must earn a B or better in each of the three courses. After successful completion of the summer licensure block, the Alternate Route Program Coordinator notifies USM’s licensure official to log into the MDE’s licensure system and place a program verification form in MDE’s licensure system on behalf of the candidate. The program verification allows the candidate to apply for a 3-year, nonrenewable, alternate route teaching license in the candidate’s Praxis II subject area. With the 3-year nonrenewable teaching license, the candidate can pursue certified employment as a teacher in a Mississippi school as early as the school year following the summer coursework.
During the first semester of teaching, the candidate will complete the final course of the TMI program, which is a teaching internship. If this teaching internship goes well, the candidate earns the TMI Certificate from USM (this certificate should not be confused with a teaching license). The MDE requires one full year of successful teaching in an endorsed subject area to earn the 5-year, renewable, alternate route teaching license (also called a “standard” license). The candidate’s school will observe TMI candidate’s second semester of teaching. At the end of the candidate’s first successful year of teaching, USM, with cooperation from the candidate’s school district and USM’s licensure official, will recommend the candidate for the 5-year renewable license.

Candidates should understand that USM does not guarantee to meet the licensure requirements of states other than Mississippi. Candidates will be responsible for verifying that their program of study meets their desired state’s licensure requirements.

TMI candidates should note that they will be paid by school districts at the bachelor’s level but will have completed about ⅓ of the coursework needed to earn the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT; see above). Converting to the MAT program after starting in the TMI program is possible but requires a second application. TMI candidates wishing to convert to MAT should note that their courses are valid for 5 years.

Admissions for the TMI program are held once a year. The deadline to apply for summer admission is around May 15 of each year. As the TMI program is not degree-granting, TMI candidates are not eligible for federal or state financial aid and must pay out of pocket or find private funding.

Overview of Jump Start Pathway

JumpStart is a licensure pathway for current University of Southern Mississippi undergraduate students who show promise as a potential teacher. A junior or senior may apply to enter as a non-degree graduate student and take the three teacher licensure courses in the licensure block while completing his/her bachelor’s degree. A successful interview with the Program Coordinator is required for admission.

JumpStart students complete the JumpStart pathway as an undergraduate student. Upon completion of the 9 hours associated with the licensure block and completion of the undergraduate degree, students must apply through the Graduate School for the Teach Mississippi Institute Program or the Master of Arts in Teaching Program. The JumpStart pathway does not result in licensure by itself but allows undergraduates to get a "jump" on completing licensure requirements.
# Alternate Route Program Plans of Study

## Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Plan of Study

### Plan of Study: Master's of Arts in Teaching (Secondary Ed) 33 Hours Minimum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coursework: 33 Hours Minimum</th>
<th>Course Taken / Subbed</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Term Taken</th>
<th>Requirements:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required: 33 Hours</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate School Online Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 603</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Signed Plan of Study Submitted to Program Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 570</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CISI research modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF 632</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18 hrs of 600 level or higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*CIS 894</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Incomplete Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT 645</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0 GPA required for graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*CIS 794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Only 2 Cs allowed (C or C+); only one grade can be replaced.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 791 or REF 601</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Application for Degree to be Filed in Graduate School at least one semester before planned graduation; Application fee paid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIR 754</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enrollment Requirement: Must be enrolled semester that your degree is to be awarded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 708</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPE 500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exit Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Students currently holding a valid teaching certificate will substitute elective/content hours

Notes:

- Total Hours: 33

Signatures:

- Student*
- Advisor*

*No Incomplete Grades

3.0 GPA required for graduation

E&R's required for graduation

Enrollment Requirement: Must be enrolled semester that your degree is to be awarded.
## Teach Mississippi Institute (TMI) Plan of Study

**Plan of Study:** Graduate Certificate in Secondary Education & Teaching (Teach Miss Inst)  
12 Hours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Student ID</th>
<th>Admit Term</th>
<th>Advisor &amp; telephone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Coursework:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Term Taken</th>
<th>Milestones: Check Deadlines</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIS 570</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Graduate School Online Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 603</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Signed Plan of Study Form to Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REF 632</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>CITI Research Modules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 694 or CIS 794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Incomplete Grades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 694 or CIS 794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.0 GPA required for graduation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 694 or CIS 794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Cs allowed; licensure courses require B or higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 694 or CIS 794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Application for Degree to beFiled in Graduate School at least one semester before planned graduation. Application fee paid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 694 or CIS 794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5-year Certification Letter from District/School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS 694 or CIS 794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A certificate must be completed within 5 years of initial enrollment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total Hours:

12  
Exit Survey

**Note:** The completed 12 hours can be applied to the MAT degree if the TMI coursework remains valid and has not expired (past the 5 years allowed).

## Jump Start Plan of Study

Jump Start candidates may complete CIS 570, CIS 603, and REF 632 as undergraduate students. Upon graduation, Jump Start candidates must choose the MAT or the TMI program and gain full admission. Upon full admission, Jump Start candidates will work towards completing the plan of study for the program they choose.
Admissions and Application Requirements

Candidates should complete the application process as early as possible to be assured that there is adequate time for all documents to be reviewed by the Admissions Committee. Admissions deadlines are provided below and cannot be extended given the current USM admissions calendar. These deadlines are subject to change based on the USM calendar.

Because the Teach Mississippi Institute (TMI) is a summer-only program, it admits students only one time per academic year. The application deadline for summer enrollment is around May 15 of each year. The official deadline is posted to the program website.

The Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) is a year-round program. It admits three times per academic year. The application deadline for fall enrollment is around August 15 of each year. The application deadline for spring enrollment is around January 15 of each year. The application deadline for summer enrollment is around May 15 of each year. These dates are subject to change. Official deadlines are posted to the program website.

Provided immediately below are application checklists for the Jump Start Pathway and the TMI / MAT programs.
Admissions to Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) and Teach Mississippi Institute (TMI)

TMI and MAT candidates should use the following checklist to ensure successful applications. Note that the requirements for admission to the TMI and MAT programs are identical. Should TMI candidates wish to convert to MAT later, they may do so, but a new MAT application is required through the graduate school.

Admissions Checklist

☐ Completed Graduate School Application
  o All materials must be present or application is denied without review.

☐ Completed Bachelor’s degree from regionally/nationally accredited institution
  o Official transcripts sent to USM and to MDE

☐ 2.75 GPA on last 60 hours attempted in Bachelor’s degree program¹

☐ Minimal Score on Nationally Normed Achievement Test
  o Option 1: ACT – 21+ Composite Score (an SAT Equivalent² will be accepted)
    OR
  o Option 2: Praxis CORE (All 3 subtests required – Test 5751 is the combined test)
    a. Reading (Test 5712) Min Score: 156
    b. Writing (Test 5722) Min Score: 162
    c. Math (Test 5732) Min Score: 150

☐ Minimal Score on Praxis II Content Test³ (Test codes as of Aug, 2018)
  o Art (Test 5134) Min Score: 158
  o Biology (Test 5235) Min Score: 150
  o Business Education (Test 5101) Min Score: 153
  o Chemistry (Test 5245) Min Score: 151
  o English Language Arts(Test 5038) Min Score: 167
  o French (Test 5174) Min Score: 153
  o Health Education (Test 5551) Min Score: 149
  o Home Economics (Test 5122) Min Score: 153
  o Library Media Specialist (Test 5311) Min Score: 143
  o Mathematics (Test 5161) Min Score: 160
  o Physical Education (Test 5091) Min Score: 145
  o Physics (Test 5265) Min Score: 139
  o Social Studies (Test 5081) Min Score: 150
  o Spanish (Test 5195) Min Score: 160

¹ The 2.75 minimum GPA requirement is a USM Grad School requirement. Because we rely on the Praxis II for admissions, state law requires the cohort GPA to be a 3.0+. Our cohorts consistently exceed this requirement.
² Minimum score of 1060. No grandfathering of scores is allowed.
³ USM offers alternate route licensure only for the subject areas listed. The state of Mississippi can alter required test codes and minimum passing scores without prior notice. It is the applicant’s responsibility to verify that correct tests were taken.
☐ 3 Letters of Recommendation
   ○ Part of Graduate School application

☐ Letter of Interest / Statement of Purpose
   ○ Part of Graduate School application

**To Complete After Being Admitted**

☐ Completed Background Check (required for continuation in the program)

☐ Tk20 Subscription (required for continuation in the program)

☐ Initial Advisement with Dr. Howell (required to register during semesters following admission)
Admissions to Jump Start

JumpStart candidates do not complete an official application through the graduate school but instead take the licensure courses as “out of career.”

Step 1: Getting Admitted to Jump Start Program

☐ 2.75 GPA on pre-major coursework (44-hour undergraduate core)

☐ Send minimal score on nationally normed achievement test directly to program coordinator.
  o Option 1: ACT – 21+ Composite Score (or the SAT equivalent\(^1\)).
  o Option 2: Praxis CORE (All 3 subtests required)
    ▪ Reading (Test 5712) Min Score: 156
    ▪ Writing (Test 5722) Min Score: 162
    ▪ Math (Test 5732) Min Score: 150

☐ 1 Letter of Recommendation from a Faculty Member or Administrator
  o Have Recommender send directly to Program Coordinator. Email attachment, sent to program coordinator, is acceptable.

☐ Completed Background Check through Castlebranch.
  o Send proof of clear Castlebranch background check directly to Program Coordinator but retain copy for your records.

Step 2: Advisement with Program Coordinator upon being granted admission

☐ Schedule an in-person or video conference advisement appointment with Program Coordinator. During this meeting, you will discuss the following:
  o Out of career enrollment form requirements through the Graduate School
  o Plans and timeline for taking and passing Praxis II in an approved subject area
  o Plans and timeline for completing undergraduate degree
  o TMI or MAT admission requirements and application process following completion of the undergraduate degree
  o TMI or MAT plan of study for completion after the undergraduate degree

Important Note: Once fully admitted to the MAT or TMI program, all policies and procedures for that program apply to the newly classified JumpStart candidates. All correspondence sent to the Program Coordinator should include: Jump Start – First Name, Last Name (USM ID #)

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\(^1\) Minimum score of 1060. No grandfathering of scores is allowed.
Program Policies and Procedures

Graduate Bulletin
Candidates should be informed about policies and procedures set forth in the Graduate Bulletin including graduate school deadlines. This Program Handbook does not supersede or in any way replace policies and procedures set forth in the Graduate Bulletin. Instead, the policies and procedures set forth in this handbook are meant to supplement those set forth in the Graduate Bulletin.

Praxis II Subject Area Assessment (no GRE)
USM’s Graduate School requires a nationally-normed achievement test for admission to graduate school. Alternate Route candidates achieve this requirement by passing the Praxis II subject area assessment, a requirement for licensure. The Alternate Route program does not, therefore, require the GRE for admission to the TMI or MAT program.

Tk20 by Watermark (formerly Tk20)
Candidates are required to use Tk20 by Watermark (formerly Tk20) for their program assessments. Watermark is the university-adopted online assessment platform. It is an online support system created for the collection and evaluation of performance data and for overall management of academic activities at USM. Candidates must subscribe to Tk20 by Watermark either by purchasing a Student Access Kit from Barnes & Noble at Southern Miss or through the link on this page. Activation usually takes 2-3 business days. After securing a Student Access Kit and registering the provided access code, candidates may log in at https://usm.tk20.com/.

Background Check
Upon admission to the program, TMI and MAT candidates must complete a certified background check. Because a background check is required to secure any teaching position in the state of Mississippi, these background checks are also conducted by the school districts that hire alternate route candidates. If candidates can produce background check results comparable to those produced by Castlebranch (the USM-approved company), it may be possible to avoid the additional check. Candidates concerned about the possible results of their background check should speak to the Program Coordinator at their earliest convenience.

Reference Requests
Program faculty are happy to write references for worthy candidates. Candidates should realize, however, that faculty can only write letters based on their knowledge of and experience with the candidate. In some instances, faculty may only have a few weeks upon which to base the reference letter. As candidates work through their program, they should make every effort to cultivate a list of references who can speak to their teaching ability.
Program Verification Forms

Following the completion of the summer licensure courses and the completion of one successful year of teaching, the Alternate Route Program Coordinator requests that USM’s licensure official complete a “program verification” within the MDE licensure system. This verification is required for the candidate to apply for both the 3-year, nonrenewable, alternate route teaching license and the 5-year, renewable, alternate route teaching license. Only candidates who are in good standing and who have completed the required coursework with a grade of B or higher are eligible for the program verification. Candidates should note that USM does not send academic transcripts or test scores to MDE although both are required for licensure purposes.

Internship Courses

Secured Teaching Position / Student Information Form. CIS 694 and CIS 794, the alternate route teaching internship courses required for licensure (one or the other for TMI, both for MAT) require school of education consent for enrollment. Upon accepting a teaching position, candidates must submit the Secured Teaching Position / Student Information form to the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator will then request that the school of education consent be removed. Candidates must then enroll in the internship courses.

Three-year Validity. The 3-year, nonrenewable, alternate route teaching license recommended after the summer licensure coursework is valid for three years from the date of issuance. Candidates must, therefore, secure a teaching position within the three-year validity period to complete the TMI or MAT program. Candidates who are having difficulty securing a teaching position should regularly consult with the Program Coordinator. The 3-year, nonrenewable, alternate route license can only be reissued if candidates retake the summer licensure coursework.

Internship Course Fee. There is a $50 course fee attached to each internship course (CIS 694 and CIS 794) which the Educational Field Experiences Office collects to cover costs of university supervisor site visits. If the candidate secures a teaching position more than 60 miles from a USM campus, additional fees may apply.

Graduation Application

TMI and MAT candidates must fill out the Application for Graduate Certificate Program (TMI candidates) or the Application for Graduate Degree (MAT candidates) the semester prior to graduation. There is a fee associated with the graduation application. Proof of payment (a receipt) should be retained and attached to the graduation application. Forms are submitted to the Program Coordinator and then sent forward to the Graduate School on the candidate’s behalf. For TMI candidates, the Application for Graduate Certificate is often submitted the same semester of admission since candidates complete 9 hours in the summer and often complete the remaining 3 hours in the fall.
Program Exit Survey

The Alternate Route Program Exit Survey must be completed before the Program Coordinator will send the graduation application forward to the Graduate School. Doing so ensures that the Exit Survey is completed and that necessary accreditation data has been collected.
Program Assessments

Purpose of Assessments

Candidates working towards the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) must complete a series of assessments prior to graduation. Teach Mississippi Institute (TMI) candidates also must complete a series of assessments prior to certificate completion. Collectively, these assessments are designed to represent the professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions of the candidates.

The assessment guidelines that follow are provided to candidates as an overview of the assessment process embedded into their certificate or degree program. Candidates are strongly encouraged to discuss these guidelines with their Program Coordinator or academic advisor early in their program. Program assessments are subject to change and revision.

Description of Assessments

- **Course Embedded Assessments (TMI & MAT):** TMI and MAT candidates may be asked to upload assessments to Tk20 by Watermark during any alternate route course. For instance, candidates complete a Classroom Management Plan in CIS 603: Organization and Management of Instruction and will upload this assessment to Tk20 by Watermark at the end of the course. Candidates may be asked to upload similar assessments throughout the program.

- **Teacher Intern Assessment Instrument (TIAI) Observation Instrument (TMI & MAT):** During the internship courses, candidates are evaluated using the TIAI. This statewide, validated instrument is used to document candidates’ emerging skills as a classroom teacher. The use of this rubric is subject to change at any time.

- **Dispositions Assessment (TMI & MAT):** Candidates’ professionalism (attitudes and behavior) are evaluated using a statewide dispositions rubric aligned with the Mississippi Teacher Code of Ethics. The Alternate Route Program maintains the highest expectations for professionalism. Candidates may be asked to self-evaluate using the rubric and to reflect on professional learning goals. Candidates who fail dispositional assessments will be counseled out of the program.

- **Comprehensive Examination (MAT only):** MAT candidates must complete a comprehensive exam to graduate from the program.

  - All MAT candidates are required to submit extensive written responses to four examination questions. The written comprehensive examination has been identified by the School of Education as the mandated examination required by the Graduate School.
  
  - Written comprehensive examinations are typically completed the semester of graduation. Please confirm date with your Program Coordinator or academic advisor.
  
  - When Alternate Route candidates submit the MAT written examination questions, they are scored by an assessment committee and results are reported to the Graduate School. Candidates who fail to pass the written comprehensive
examination will be notified in writing by the School of Education along with steps to remediate weaknesses in the responses. Candidates will then retake the comprehensive exam a second and final time. In accordance with the policies described in the Graduate Bulletin, candidates will only be given two opportunities to pass the comprehensive examination.

- Candidates “sit” for the exam during a 4-hour, scheduled session on a Friday or Saturday, as determined by the School of Education. Candidates may also complete the exam online with a USM-approved proctor present paid for at the candidate’s expense. Candidates are encouraged to prepare for the exams by revisiting their alternate route coursework. All responses must be supported by the professional literature and candidates should cite appropriate sources.

- Academic Integrity in Responses: Candidates must take great care to ensure their written responses are well thought out, supported by the professional literature, and are original. Plagiarized or unoriginal responses will automatically receive a failing score. If it is determined that the response violates the university’s plagiarism policy, the university’s procedures will be followed.

- Scoring of the Written Responses: Written responses are scored by committee members using a standard rubric. Responses are scored on a scale of 1–4, with an average score of 3 or higher required to pass. To pass the written examination, the candidate must have a rating of 3 or higher from each faculty reviewer on each question.

- **Exit Survey (TMI & MAT):** The Program Exit Survey must be completed before the Program Coordinator will send the certificate or graduation application forward to the Graduate School. The exit survey is electronic and is emailed to candidates at the time of the certificate or graduation application.
Licensure Requirements

The Mississippi State Legislature and the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) author policy governing teacher licensure. Information regarding Alternate Route licensure policy can be found at: [https://www.mdek12.org/OTL/OEL/Alternate](https://www.mdek12.org/OTL/OEL/Alternate) The documents provided below are for reference purposes. Each document sets forth policy related to the licensure process for the TMI and MAT pathways to licensure. The documents originate with MDE and are subject to change.

Candidates should note that there are currently three types of licenses relevant to the Alternate Route candidates:

1. **Special, 1-Year, Non-Renewable License**: The special, 1-year, non-renewable license is issued to candidates who have not passed all requirements for the 3-year, nonrenewable license. It is issued at the request of hiring districts and can be reissued up to three times. USM’s only role with this license is to verify enrollment in the alternate route program.

2. **3-Year, Non-Renewable License**: The 3-year, nonrenewable license is issued following the completion of the summer coursework, which USM calls the alternate route licensure block. Following successful completion of the licensure block, the Program Coordinator notifies USM’s licensure official to place a program verification form within MDE’s online, licensure management system (ELMS). The candidate must still log into MDE ELMS and apply for the 3-year, nonrenewable license.

3. **5-Year, Renewable License (Standard License)**: The 5-year, renewable (standard) license is issued following the successful completion of the first year of teaching. For TMI candidates, this includes successful completion of either CIS 694 or CIS 794. For MAT candidates, this includes successful completion of both CIS 694 and CIS 794. When one year of teaching has been successfully completed along with the required internship coursework, the Program Coordinator notifies USM’s licensure official to place a program verification form within MDE’s online, licensure management system (ELMS). The candidate must still log into MDE ELMS and apply for the 5-year, renewable license.

Candidates should note that USM cannot recommend anyone for licensure until after relevant grades have posted. Once grades post and the Alternate Route Program Coordinator requests program verification forms through USM’s licensure official, it generally takes five business days before candidates can apply for their license. The delay can be frustrating for candidates, but candidates should rest assured that USM makes its recommendations as quickly as possible. Candidates can expedite the licensure process by sending their transcripts and test scores to MDE as soon after admission as possible.

Should candidates fail to apply for the license once the program verification form has been issued, additional delays will ensue.
Candidates should also note that it is possible to start a teaching position before the license is formally issued by the state of Mississippi. While school districts are cautious about hiring candidates without proper credentials, they understand that the state must have time to process alternate route licensure applications. The Program Coordinator can assist candidates who face resistance from district administrators or who need verification of pending licensure.
### Master of Arts In Teaching

|---|---|
| Program Entrance Requirements | 1. Bachelor’s degree from a regionally/nationally accredited institution of higher learning  
2. Twenty-one (21) ACT equivalent or achieve the nationally recommended passing score on the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators examination; and  
No less than 2.75 GPA on content coursework in the requested area of certification or passing Praxis II scores at or above the national recommended score provided that the accepted cohort of candidates of the institution's teacher education program meets or exceeds a 3.0 GPA on pre-major coursework.  
3. Praxis II (Specialty Area Test) |
| Requirements for Three Year Alternate Route License | 1. Complete six (6) hours pre-teaching course requirements from an approved Master of Arts in Teaching program  
2. Program Completion Verification  
*MAT Program offers a three year alternate route license.* |
| Location and Contact Information | Alcorn State University  
Belhaven College  
Delta State University  
Jackson State University  
Mississippi College  
Mississippi Valley State University  
University of Mississippi *(Grades 4-6 not offered)*  
William Carey University  
Mississippi State University  
University of Southern Mississippi *(Grades 4-6 not offered)*  
Mississippi University for Women *(Grades 4-6 not offered)*  
Tougaloo College  
**William Carey University and Mississippi State University are the only locations approved for Special Education. More information can be obtained at the following link:**  
*For contact information see Appendix F* |
| Requirements for Five Year Alternate Route License | Complete six semester hours including the internship prescribed by the participating institution |
| Fees | Colleges charge normal fees for 12 semester hours |

**NOTE:** Contact the institution offering the program for enrollment information application deadlines fees starting dates etc.

Source: [https://www.mdek12.org/OTL/OEL/Alternate](https://www.mdek12.org/OTL/OEL/Alternate)
## APPENDIX H
### ALTERNATE ROUTE TEACHING LICENSES (CONTINUED)

#### Teach Mississippi Institute

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<table>
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<th>Program Entrance Requirements</th>
<th>1. Bachelor’s degree from a regionally/nationally accredited institution of higher learning</th>
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<td>3. Praxis II (Specialty Area Test)</td>
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| Requirements for Alternate Route License* | Eight Week Training Session in the summer - (Times and dates determined by offering colleges/universities)  
**OR**  
TMI Online program through University of Mississippi Continuing Education |
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<td>*TMI offers a three year alternate route license</td>
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| Location and Contact Information | Delta State University - summer graduate program  
Mississippi State University - summer graduate program  
University of Southern Mississippi - summer graduate program  
University of Mississippi - online program only - 1-877-915-7313 |

| Requirements for Five Year Alternate Route License | 1. Completion of one year internship period with mentoring and induction program in local school district  
2. Recommendation by local school district |

| Fees | Fee to be determined by the offering university |

Source: [https://www.mdek12.org/OTL/OEL/Alternate](https://www.mdek12.org/OTL/OEL/Alternate)
Supplemental Endorsements

Supplemental endorsements are endorsed subject areas added to an existing license by means of completing 21+ hours of approved coursework in a discipline or passing Praxis II subject area assessments in the endorsed subject areas.

MDE maintains lists of subject areas that can be added by coursework or by Praxis II subject area assessments.

It is the candidates’ responsibility to apply for supplemental endorsements and to contact the Program Coordinator regarding their desire to add supplemental endorsements.

USM has successfully helped candidates add supplemental endorsements to both 3-year, nonrenewable, alternate route teaching licenses and to 5-year, renewable, alternate route licenses. Candidates interested in supplemental endorsements should speak with the Program Coordinator to begin the process.

The Program Coordinator, working in conjunction with USM’s licensure official, will provide the necessary verification for supplemental endorsements at the request of the candidate. However, it is the responsibility of the candidate to work with MDE to ensure that supplemental endorsements are properly added.

Information on Supplemental Endorsements can be found at: https://www.mdek12.org/OTL/OEL/supplemental
Securing a Teaching Position

The guidelines provided below are offered as advice to candidates seeking a teaching position. Ultimately, it is the candidate’s responsibility to judge what is appropriate to their situation.

**Recommended Steps:**

1. Look over the state’s recommendations and take the steps you deem appropriate.

2. Search for teaching positions listed by the state. Apply as warranted.
   a. [http://teach.k12.ms.us/index.html](http://teach.k12.ms.us/index.html)

3. Search for teaching positions via the websites of individual school districts. Apply as warranted.
   a. Not every school district posts their openings with the state, particularly those districts not having trouble recruiting. Therefore, it is important to also check individual school district’s websites.

4. Search for and attend any teacher job fairs.
   a. Districts will post fairs. Universities will typically host one fair in the fall and one in the spring.

5. Network with other educators.
   a. Talk yourself up to anyone who is already teaching.
   b. Use social media to connect with educators in your targeted district(s).
   c. Reach out to anyone you know in the district you are targeting. Knowing someone is often the most efficient way of securing a job.

6. Monitor and tweak your social media platforms.
   a. Be aware that many principals’ first action will be to Google you. Be sure your digital presence helps you secure a position.

**Optional Steps:**

1. Contact principals directly by email.
   a. Cautionary note: Some districts frown on contacting principals before being cleared at the district level.

2. Stop by schools and school districts and introduce yourself to the principal.
   a. Cautionary note: Some districts frown on being so direct because it interrupts their normal hiring process.

3. “Like” USM’s Alternate Route Facebook page. We post jobs all the time.

4. Schedule an appointment with the Program Coordinator to review all your hiring materials (resume, cover letter, etc.).
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

MAT as Preferred Program
1. I just want to get this done quickly. Why shouldn’t I just do TMI?

Sometimes quicker is not better. The TMI program provides only 9 hours of coursework prior to the candidate securing a teaching position. Teaching is complex. It is difficult to address all the demands of teaching within 9 hours of coursework though USM does its very best to do so. TMI candidates should anticipate a much longer, and perhaps more difficult, transition to the profession. In contrast, MAT candidates complete 33 hours of coursework and have ongoing support from program faculty for a more extended period (3 to 4 semesters). With this sustained contact and more in-depth coursework, MAT candidates often have an easier transition to the teaching profession and experience greater satisfaction.

Switching to MAT
2. I began as a TMI candidate but now I want to do the full MAT. What do I do?

Schedule an appointment with the Program Coordinator. You will have to apply to the MAT program. However, your application will be nearly identical to your previously completed TMI application. The new application is a USM Graduate School requirement. We must have you reclassified as a MAT candidate and the application is how this is accomplished.

Licensure
3. I forgot to apply for my license. Now when I log in, I don’t have a program verification. What should I do?

Contact the Program Coordinator. In conjunction with USM’s licensure official, we will do what we can to assist you.

4. I hold an endorsement to teach social studies but my hiring district has asked me to teach Spanish on an emergency basis. What should I do?

Speak with the Program Coordinator before agreeing to the new position because it could impact USM’s ability to observe you during the internship courses.

5. I’ve heard about a special, nonrenewable license. What is that?

Under state law (June 2016), alternate route candidates can receive a special, nonrenewable license at a district’s request so long as they are currently enrolled in and making progress towards an alternate route certificate or degree. USM’s role is minimal. USM simply verifies to your district and/or the state that you are enrolled. It will be up to
you to communicate to your district and to ensure that you have met their requirements under this law.

6. I submitted my licensure application and my paperwork for supplemental endorsements, but now I have received a letter saying I must send my transcripts. Didn’t USM do that for me?

USM’s Registrar's Office will not automatically send your transcripts to MDE. You can order them online through your Student Center in SOAR or through the Registrar’s website. They will send them electronically and you should get an email when they go out.

**Teaching Positions**

7. Are we responsible for securing a job ourselves, or is there a way to get help with that?

You are responsible for securing a teaching position in a Mississippi public school with a new teacher induction program in an endorsed content area. If we hear of schools that need positions filled, we will certainly get the word out to you via our Facebook page. We suggest using the Securing a Teaching Position help document above to guide you.

8. Is the internship supervised? How does supervision look; is it part of another class?

Once you have secured a job, you take one (TMI) or two (MAT) internship classes. CIS 694 is our fall semester internship class. CIS 794 is our spring semester internship class. The faculty member assigned to that class communicates with you on regularly for the semester. Additionally, there are assignments that she/he will ask of you. Visitations to your site by the supervisor will be coordinated with you as well.

9. Can I teach without taking the internship course?

Yes, if your district wants to hire you. However, candidates should realize that they can never convert a 3-year, nonrenewable license to a 5-year, renewable license without the internship courses. As a result, the 3-year license will expire, you will no longer hold a viable teaching license, and you may lose your teaching position.

**Transfer Credits**

10. I am thinking about taking some courses at another institution. Will these count at USM if I want to do the MAT?

Using your transcripts, we can look at the possibility of transferring up to 6 graduate credit hours from another institution for the MAT. These evaluations are done by the Program
Coordinator on a case-by-case basis. Courses cannot be transferred for certificate programs like TMI.

**Graduation**

11. I am not ready to graduate. How do I defer graduation?

The candidate will need to complete the Graduation Deferment Form to change the date of graduation. There may be fees associated with the deferment.

12. I filled out my graduation application and I paid my graduation or certificate completion fee. What do I do with the forms and the receipt?

Please print the form – sign and send to the Program Coordinator to sign (scan & email). There are fees associated with graduation or certificate completion. To pay the fees, go to the Graduate School website. Pay the fee and the late fees as applicable. Send the receipt payment with the application form to the Program Coordinator.