

North Carolina Common Memorandum of Understanding for Public School Units and Educator Preparation Programs

August 9, 2021



Creating a Common MOU for North Carolina PSUs and EPPs: Moving Forward Together

Background

In summer 2020, the North Carolina Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NCACTE) was approached by the NC Department of Public Instruction to initiate work on a common Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that could be used by school systems (also known as Public School Units or PSUs) and educator preparation programs (EPPs). This request was born of several issues coalescing for a perfect storm. School district human resources directors and EPP field placement coordinators have long noted the need to simplify the entangling web of bureaucracy inherent when every district and every preparation program in North Carolina each have a different MOU document to negotiate. The COVID-19 pandemic only accentuated this jumbled disarray; adapting our systems became doubly difficult with each organization having different expectations. As rightly noted by some policymakers, developing common MOU language could help to proactively address state-level educator preparation program needs. PSUs and EPPs alike can benefit from this work as partners in the North Carolina educator pipeline.

Guiding Principles

This final document was created using three guiding principles: 1) Authentic Engagement, 2) Focus on Flexibility and Sustainability, and 3) Transparency and Timeliness.

- 1) Authentic Engagement: The NCACTE leadership immediately extended invitations to several other stakeholder groups to work on this common MOU project, with much success. The current version of the document (Version 9) was developed with input from seven North Carolina organizations that served on the MOU Stakeholder Working Committee (a list is included below). In addition, the “wordsmithing” of this draft MOU document was completed collaboratively by individuals representing school district human resource directors, EPP field experiences coordinators, and school board attorneys. The current version includes all received feedback to date.
- 2) Focus on Flexibility and Sustainability: Given our collective experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic, our priority has been establishing flexibility within the MOU document. To that end, we have framed this MOU based on NC statute requirements, while adding additional language as recommended by the committee members. Granular details that may be specific to one PSU or EPP (such as the frequency of student teaching observations, for example) are not directly included in the MOU document; instead, the committee has created a **Supplemental Document** for school districts/EPPs to use in establishing common expectations. The MOU establishes that clinical placement processes will occur but does not overly prescribe the nuances of those processes; the Supplemental Document collaboratively establishes these details. We believe the

resulting document covers all legal requirements while still allowing PSUs/EPPs to flexibly improve their processes as needed without revising the entire MOU.

- 3) Transparency and Timeliness: Since our public announcement regarding this work was disseminated September 21, 2020, our committee has met in various forms as the work has evolved. A draft MOU document was posted online via the NCACTE website for public comment and sharing widely with stakeholder groups in February 2021. The collected feedback was reviewed by the committee and suggestions incorporated into the document (a copy of all public comments collected and the committee's responses is also included with these documents). The final MOU document has been reviewed by legal experts and practitioners alike, and we hope that PSUs and EPPs can find it useful in developing common expectations on preparing educators for North Carolina.

Using the NC Common MOU documents

These documents were developed as a resource. **While these documents are not mandated for use by any entity**, stakeholder groups are encouraged to utilize and endorse these documents to guide clinical fieldwork agreements between PSUs and EPPs.

- 4) The **MOU document** (pages 2-13) is designed to include legislative requirements for clinical partnerships in all areas of educator preparation (e.g., teachers, principals, counselors, etc.) while also allowing flexibility for the PSU/EPP relationship to evolve as needed. The MOU includes the following sections:
 - a. Section 1 - Definitions
 - b. Section 2 - Field Experiences and Clinical Internships
 - c. Section 3 - Clinical Residencies (as currently defined by NC law)
 - d. Section 4 - General Terms and Conditions
- 5) Some areas of the MOU are deliberately left blank; these are highlighted **in yellow** for PSUs/EPPs to collaboratively complete. The **Supplemental Document** (pages 14-16) is designed to assist with this.
- 6) To facilitate the granular, detailed work of establishing collaborative partnerships, a **Supplemental Document** is included. It is intended that PSU and EPP representatives review the Supplemental Document together and establish common expectations for the questions on these pages. The Supplemental Document is not exclusive; all entities are encouraged to raise any questions they deem relevant in establishing the parameters of clinical field experiences.
- 7) The **Sexual Offender Registry Check Certification Form Sample** form on page 17 is included as an example. PSUs/EPPs may develop an alternative form if they wish.
- 8) These documents may be applicable to any organization that partners with an EPP to offer clinical experiences.

Sustainability and Future Review

The MOU Stakeholder Working Committee recommends that these documents be housed on the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) website, in order to facilitate wide sharing of this information to all stakeholders. In addition, we also strongly suggest adding a mechanism for convening a group to review these MOU documents at least every two years with stakeholder input. Specifically, insurance requirements and coverage for EPP students should be verified/updated, along with any changed legislative or State Board of Education policy mandates as appropriate. Finally, we recommend wide dissemination of these documents via public websites, newsletter updates, regular announcements, and any other outlets as deemed appropriate by stakeholders.

I would like to publicly thank the committee members for their efforts, time, and diligence. A project of this magnitude requires the collaborative work of many! Your endeavors are much appreciated.

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MOU Stakeholder Working Committee Chair

NC Common MOU Stakeholder Working Committee

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