

Minnesota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

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MACTE Minute – October 2020

This MACTE Minute is in abbreviated communication of a letter that is being shared with the Teacher Prep Committee.

The MACTE Executive Committee has heard concerns from many teacher preparation providers (TPPs) regarding the inability to secure field experience placements for candidates, particularly in certain grade scopes and content areas during both fall 2020 and spring 2021. With challenges school partners are facing, changes to teachers' assignments, and ongoing adjustments due to COVID-19, it is difficult to meet current rule regarding pre-student teaching field experiences.

To compensate for this, teacher educators are working hard to follow current PELSB guidance to ensure that clinical experiences are aligned to scope and content, that the unit has a process to provide and require experiences in the correct scope and content, and that candidates will have clinical experiences at all levels within the scope at some point during their preparation program Minnesota Rule 8705.1000, subpart 3(B) and page 5 of the COVID19 Policy Manual dated 9/2/2020.

However, it is becoming clear in our interactions with school partners that:

1. Pre-student teaching field experiences are not prioritized, considered "essential" and/or not allowed by many districts and schools. Any cooperating teachers available and able, may only have the capacity to work with student teachers if possible.
2. Many qualified cooperating teachers have been reassigned or are unavailable for pre-student teaching (and student teaching) field experiences. MACTE members report experiencing a significant reduction in the numbers of school partners available for this work.
3. Many TPPs made plans for fall 2020 as well as for missed opportunities in the previous spring 2020 field experiences with the hope that we would be able to address missing field experiences in the scope of a licensure during a spring 2021 student teaching. Given current forecasting for the pandemic, many of our PreK-12 partners cannot commit to field experience and student teaching placements for our candidates for the remainder of fall 2020 or spring 2021. As noted, our priority will remain student teaching placements that are sustainable.

Therefore, MACTE requests that PELSB adopt a broad variance for all providers for the portion of Minnesota Rule 8705.1000, subpart 3 (B) relating to field experiences in the full scope of a licensure in situations where each TPP impacted would:

1. document the lack of available opportunities for placing candidates as part of the candidates' record.
2. replace the missing opportunities in the required grade bands.

In efforts to move this forward, MACTE has recommendations regarding ways to counter missing scope experiences for the TPC and PELSB Board to consider as noted in our aforementioned complete letter.

MACTE proposes that the broad variance could be used to cover gaps in scope for up to 50% of the required hours in field experiences prior to student teaching. We further request that the requirement for 100 hours of field experience required prior to student teaching per Minnesota Rule 8705.1000, Subpart 3(G) - be reduced to 70 hours, since most virtual learning lessons are reduced in length, particularly for younger students.

Given decisions are being made by presidents and governing boards at many institutions that will impact our ability to partner with schools and submit institution-specific discretionary variances in time for decision making by PELSB this fall, there is urgency in this request as providers cannot wait for additional guidance information to be provided by PELSB in their regular November meeting. We ask that the Teacher Preparation Committee and PELSB seek to address this recommendation at their earliest convenience.