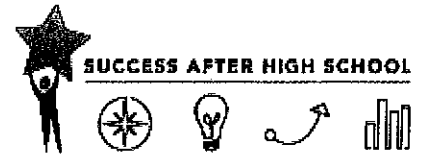


# Ed Prep Policy Advisory - October 2021

## COVID-19-Related Impacts on Ed Prep in 2021-2022



**This updated advisory provides guidance regarding policy and practice implications for educator preparation for Summer 2021 through the 2021-2022 school year, given the continued impacts related to the COVID-19 state of emergency and related concerns surrounding the public health pandemic. Please note that some of these flexibilities cover the full 2021-2022 school year and some are only applicable through the fall 2021 semester.**

While this advisory does not comprehensively address all types of impact imaginable, it centers the safety and health of faculty/staff, candidates, and PK-12 students while maintaining high expectations for implementing comprehensive educator preparation programs that well-prepare educators to meet the needs of the students for decades to come. That said, in re-imagining what it looks like to prepare educators in a pandemic/post-pandemic world, *organizations should strive to continue to meet all existing DESE expectations as much as possible as we collectively move through the 2021-2022 school year.*

Additionally, as previously communicated, we intend to continue a dimension to the next iteration of our program review process that centers organizations' work to advance racial equity. Communities of color are currently facing the COVID-19 pandemic and the negative impacts of systemic racism. It is critical that providers continue to work and evolve faculty, candidate, and student experiences to intentionally and strategically disrupt and dismantle racism given the significant trauma caused by systemic oppression and COVID-19 on communities of color.

Through this guidance, we seek to continue to be descriptive of expectations, not prescriptive of approach, as we believe this affords organizations the space necessary to respond to this situation based on local context.

As you will see below, most existing expectations for educator preparation will not change for 2021-22. That said, the guidance outlined in this advisory includes continued flexibility in several facets of preparation based on ongoing input and conversation with providers. The guidance in this advisory is applicable to all initial and professional licenses, with the exception of licenses under ASHA or NASP approval<sup>1</sup>, in which case organizations should continue to follow any guidance issued by these entities.

The table below is a high-level overview of the guidance and flexibilities being offered in this advisory. Sections under this overview contain additional details, rationale, and considerations critical to the implementation and any adjustments providers might make in response to the ongoing pandemic in 2021-2022.

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<sup>1</sup> Speech, Language, and Hearing Disorders Specialist Teachers and School Psychologists



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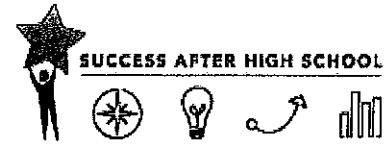
### COVID-19 2021-22 Preparation Provider Flexibility Cheat Sheet

Category	Summary Notes
<u>Waivers</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Existing <u>waiver policy</u> remains in place and provides a basis for much of the flexibility granted throughout this advisory</li> <li>Continued flexibility granted for <u>out of state</u> and <u>split practicum</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Out of State</i>: Flexibility for practicum settings that do not implement the MA Curriculum Frameworks through the <b>Fall 2021 Semester ONLY</b></li> <li><i>Split Practicum</i>: Allow for the waiver of one of the practicum settings for a license that requires a split practicum (e.g., Early Childhood, Music) <b>through the end of the 2021-22 school year</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>All waivers granted to individuals on an as-needed basis; No blanket across-the-board waivers</li> <li>Documentation requirements remain in effect</li> </ul>
<u>Pre-practicum requirements</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectations remain in full effect (see <u>Pre-Practicum Guidelines</u>)</li> <li>Pieces (including Gateway tasks) may be adjusted or, in some cases, waived <b>through the end of the 2021-22 school year</b></li> </ul>
<u>Required Practicum Hours</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectations remain in full effect (see link <u>here</u>)</li> <li>Can be completed remotely, as appropriate based on district assignment</li> </ul>
<u>Supervising Practitioner Role</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to reduce observation and evaluation requirements by supplementing with additional program supervisor support</li> </ul>
<u>Performance Assessments</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectations remain in full effect (see <u>Licensure and Program Approval regulations</u>)</li> <li>Can be completed remotely, as appropriate based on district assignment</li> <li>Shift in supervising practitioner responsibility allowed, sign-off by two supervisors still required</li> <li>Exceptions in place for disrupted placements as necessary</li> </ul>
<u>Making Course or Program Changes</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fully Approved providers retain flexibility and autonomy necessary to adapt and adjust programming as necessary to ensure candidate readiness; DESE does not need to review and approve this</li> </ul>
<u>SEI Endorsement</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be offered fully remote in synchronous sessions</li> <li>Candidates are still required to have at least four separate experiences with ELs; alternatives provided for this requirement if truly unable to complete</li> </ul>
<u>MTEL</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectations remain in effect as a requirement for initial licensure</li> <li>If providers have not reconsidered and revised internal policies around <u>MTEL requirements for admission or continuation in the program</u>, we continue to encourage you to consider these recommended shifts</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While MTEL retake rates are considered as a source of data in program review, an organization’s MTEL pass rate is not a required state accountability metric</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Subject-Matter Knowledge Requirements</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expectations remain in full effect (see <u>SMK Guidelines</u>)</li> </ul>

### Waivers:

Approved organizations are charged with ensuring individuals are ready to make a positive impact on PK-12 students once they are employed under a license and have the authority and responsibility to make adjustments as necessary to address the needs of their candidates. This includes extending waivers when appropriate for an individual candidate, based on program needs and a specific candidate’s experiences (see link [here](#)). Organizations continue to have the authority and autonomy to enact programmatic decision-making that is supportive of candidate experiences that lead to effective instruction. As always, in each decision to issue a waiver, organizations must carefully consider the benefits of waiving requirements and the impact it will have on a candidate’s preparation experience and, ultimately, their effectiveness with and impact on PK-12 students. Therefore, organizations should not issue blanket waivers for multiple candidates in any circumstance; each waiver should be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In addition to what is always allowed to be waived under individual circumstances (i.e., up to half the practicum, Supervising Practitioner requirements, courses), **we are continuing to allow expansion of waiver guidance (please note distinction in timelines for this expansion) to:**

- (a) include the possibility that a Practicum setting may not use the MA Curriculum Frameworks through the **Fall 2021 Semester ONLY**, and (see [additional details below](#))
- (b) allow for the waiver of one of the practicum settings for a license that requires a split practicum (e.g., Early Childhood, Music) **through the end of the 2021-22 school year**. See below under [“Practicum Setting”](#) and [“Split Practicum Requirement”](#) for additional information.

If organizations have not yet re-visited waiver policies since the beginning of the State of Emergency, we encourage organizations to re-visit their written waiver policy and consider temporarily amending it to be in alignment with potential adjustments that will be considered for their candidates through the 2021-22 year. Any waivers issued should be aligned with the organization’s articulated written waiver policy, as per expectations for the use of waivers in the Program Approval Guidelines. We do not plan to do a data collection process regarding the use of waivers during 2021-22; however, as noted in the [Candidate Records Retention Advisory](#), documentation showing implementation of the waiver policy for individuals must be kept for all candidates for the most recent three academic years and may be requested during a future review.



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### Expectations for Field-Based Experiences (FBE):

As a reminder, each district will make decisions regarding how to engage with candidates in their physical and virtual school settings in 2021-22, as they have always maintained this level of local control. We encourage organizations to proactively reach out to PK-12 partners to identify mutually beneficial approaches to field-based experiences within this ongoing pandemic, supporting the additional needs districts will be facing while providing candidates the opportunity to work directly in school settings with PK-12 students for practice and feedback. DESE will continue to encourage districts to leverage their Ed Prep partners in their broader talent management efforts, keeping in mind potential long-term impacts on the educator pipeline. Please see the link here to the [Student Teacher Module](#) included in the DESE-issued Talent Guide.

- **Pre-Practicum Experiences for Teacher Candidates:** The purpose of the pre-practicum is to provide candidates with multiple opportunities to apply learning from coursework into practice through increasingly authentic teaching experiences in preparation to successfully demonstrate readiness during the practicum. As a reminder, there is not a specific number of hours required for pre-practicum experiences. Organizations should continue to explore ways in which candidates can experience both stage 1 (observe and practice) and stage 2 (direct engagement with PK-12 students) opportunities and receive feedback on their engagement at least two times. If in exhausting all options, a candidate is unable to meet the practice and feedback expectations in a PK-12 setting and/or with PK-12 students as outlined in the [Pre-Prac Guidelines](#), a waiver may be issued and documented in the candidate's file. **This flexibility extends through the 2021-22 school year.** As organizations explore different ways to expose candidates to both stage 1 and 2 opportunities, they may consider leveraging the [OPTIC](#) platform in place of in-person classroom observations (stage 1), and/or reach out to partner schools/districts to explore the potential of having candidates support tutoring, or screener/diagnostic assessments they may be issuing at the beginning of the school year (stage 2). See the "Performance Assessment" section below for additional information regarding pre-prac gateways.
- **Required FBE Hours:** The full set of required practicum FBE hours, as per the [regulations](#), are expected to be met by candidates engaging in practicum during the 2021-2022 school year, including hours in full responsibility of the licensure role. Given that some districts may still limit candidate placements due to ongoing uncertainties, we understand this presents a challenge. However, it is important that candidates have the opportunity to sufficiently put their knowledge and skills to practice in authentic settings with PK-12 students. Candidates can engage in practicum experiences fully in-person, fully remotely through platforms their practicum districts are using, or some combination of remote and in-person experiences. Ultimately, any hours in which candidates engage in activities that an individual in the licensed





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role would be expected to engage in as an instructor/leader count as practicum hours. It is important to consider the types of experiences that licensed educators are being asked to pursue in 2021-2022, as well as looking forward to the future after this pandemic passes.

- **Practicum Setting:** The requirement of a practicum setting that uses the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks can be waived through the **fall 2021 semester** only. For example, a candidate may be home in Alabama with an option to complete their practicum at a local school that does not use MA Curriculum Frameworks. When waiving this requirement, organizations should consider the extent to which the standards used in the practicum placement aligns with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks, and any necessary additional supports. For example, the Common Core standards are closely aligned to the MA Curriculum Frameworks, and candidates in states using these standards may need little additional support; however, a candidate in a state operating under completely different frameworks may require additional support or experiences to develop appropriate fluency with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Supplemental experiences (e.g., OPTIC, micro-teaching with peers using MA Frameworks) should be considered in these cases, and the unique grounding practices within the MA Frameworks (e.g., Math and Science/Engineering practices, History/Social Science and ELA guiding principles) should be elevated throughout coursework.
- **Split Practicum Requirement:** The Early Childhood license, teacher licenses with all grade levels included (e.g., Music, Dance), and the Moderate and Severe Disabilities license require a number of FBE hours across different grade levels or classroom settings (see regulations). If an organization is unable to secure a practicum opportunity in each of the grade-level or classroom settings required, a single practicum placement can be used for the full practicum, and a waiver should be issued for that candidate. Organizations should identify additional opportunities across the full grade band or different classroom settings to ensure that anyone endorsed for the license will in fact be well-equipped with the practice and feedback to well-serve students in any of the grades or settings they will be licensed to teach. **This flexibility extends through the 2021-22 school year.**
- **Supervising Practitioner (SP) Requirements:** Given that SPs with whom organizations have partnered in the past may be experiencing varying degrees of impact as a result of COVID-19, we encourage organizations to think flexibly about the role of SPs in the 2021-2022 school year. For example, a program may take on a heavier role in assessing candidates by having two program supervisors (PSs) intentionally support a candidate such that there is less responsibility on the SP; this includes the ability for two PSs to sign off on the performance assessment as long as at least one of them holds an active license in the program area. Alternatively, for example, providers may consider adopting a practice of candidate cohorts where a single SP might support multiple practicum students, while still ensuring each candidate is able to gain the necessary experiences and fulfill full responsibility of the licensure role. As a reminder, the expectations of identifying an SP with a MA license, three years of experience under the role,



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and a proficient or exemplary rating in the most recent evaluation have previously been and continue to be allowed to be waived on a case-by-case basis.

- **Practicum Observations:** Traditional modes of observing a candidate during a practicum (i.e. being there in person) may be expanded to be reflective of the mode of the practicum as well as health and safety needs. For example, supervisors might view a recorded lesson that was delivered in person or virtually, a supervisor might observe a lesson “live” through video technology, or videos could be uploaded to the OPTIC platform for feedback and evaluation.

### Expectations for Performance Assessments:

- **Teacher Candidates:**
  - **Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP):** All components of CAP will be required in the 2021-2022 school year, including Subject Matter Knowledge (see updated CAP Handbook for forms that include this additional element). However, as per guidance noted above in the FBE section, organizations should think flexibly about how evidence will be collected and by whom it will be evaluated. Additionally, if a candidate has an interrupted practicum experience due to school closures and must complete their FBE hours across multiple practicum settings/placements, that is acceptable and different components of the CAP can be completed in different settings.
  - **Gateway Tasks:** Organizations should work to implement pre-practicum gateway tasks in full alignment with the Pre-Practicum Guidelines. If, in exhausting all options, an individual candidate is unable to complete a gateway in a PK-12 setting and/or with PK-12 students, then a pre-practicum waiver may be implemented and should be saved within the candidate's file. Providers can allow different gateway tasks within a single program if necessary. As with all situations, when a waiver is being implemented, decisions should be made based on the extenuating circumstances an individual is experiencing, on a case-by-case basis.
- **Performance Assessment for Leaders (PAL):** PAL is a principal/assistant principal licensure requirement, and as such, candidates will continue to need to demonstrate their readiness through this assessment in order to be eligible for the license. We know many providers have embedded supports and components of PAL directly into programs. To that end, providers should consider how to innovatively partner with PK-12 schools/districts to enable the candidate to get experiences necessary to demonstrate their readiness on PAL tasks. We have not changed the requirements within the evidence rubrics; many of the PAL tasks include requirements that can be completed in a virtual setting (e.g. the PAL handbook does not state that small working groups or family/community engagement events must occur in person). Additionally:
  - Task 3 requires that PAL candidates upload two videos, among other things. The two videos include: 1) a classroom observation and 2) a feedback session focusing on that



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classroom observation where both the PAL candidate and the observed teacher are visible. During 2021-22, candidates may continue to submit videos of virtual classroom observations and/or feedback sessions conducted virtually. If a candidate is working with a teacher who has a previously recorded classroom observation, the candidate may base their feedback on that previous recording as long as it fulfills the requirements for PAL videos. Candidates must submit a recording of both the classroom and the feedback session, whether they are virtual or not, as they are critical elements for PAL. All confidentiality rules still apply, and virtual feedback sessions must still ensure that both the PAL candidate and observed teacher are visible in the recording.

- **Specialist Teacher, School Support Personnel, and Administrator Candidates:** As is always the case, organizations are expected to continue to implement a performance assessment appropriate for the license, and use it to support and evaluate a candidates' readiness prior to issuing an endorsement for the license.

### Additional Program Requirements:

- **Temporary Programmatic Changes:** Organizations are encouraged to make programmatic updates based on your context, monitor the impacts of these updates, and continue to make adjustments as necessary. For example, programs may adapt courses based on National Standards for Quality online teaching as they move courses online, revise course content to support candidates with teaching in remote PK-12 settings, or introduce flexibility for courses with embedded FBE experiences. In making temporary adjustments or maintaining adjustments previously made, we encourage organizations to consider the differential impacts of the current health crisis on candidates based on the length of their program (e.g., four years versus 18 months) as well as various licensure tracks. Organizations with full approval will not be required to submit temporary changes to DESE made as a result of the current state of emergency. Organizations that are Approved with Conditions or under Probationary Approval who make temporary programmatic changes, *and* are not currently in the process of review, should reach out to DESE to provide an explanation of proposed changes and how they align with the formal review conditions currently in place for your organization.
- **SEI Endorsement:**
  - **Delivery model:** Moving into the 2021-22 school year and beyond, including Summer 2021, SEI Endorsement courses can be offered fully in person, in a "blended learning" format (featuring in-person class sessions and online class time), or in an entirely online format (in which synchronous web meetings replace the in-person class sessions). It is important to note that the course cannot be offered as a fully self-paced, asynchronous course. The online format requires regular synchronous interaction with the instructor and other course participants as well as discussion boards that require the participants to log in and participate in discussions.



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- **SEI Standalone FBE requirement:** As you know, SEI Endorsement requires a field-based experience where strategies are modeled and practiced in the course, then practiced with students (preferably ELs) in a classroom setting, and reflected on with the course instructor for feedback (peer feedback is also advised). Additionally, candidates should have at least four separate experiences to practice with students in a real classroom. For the 2021-22 school year, if a candidate cannot complete the required FBE in the standalone course due to school closures and restrictions, they can be provided student profiles of English Learners by the instructor (example profiles can be accessed [here](#)), and their peers can "become" the EL student to whom candidates deliver a mini-lesson and receive feedback. Alternatively, candidates can practice through [Mursion](#), teaching an English Learner avatar. Organizations should also consider identifying existing video resources candidates can use to observe teachers implementing high quality instruction to English Learners.
- **MTEL Considerations:** Organizations should continue to anticipate restricted access to [MTEL tests](#) during the state of emergency given distancing requirements that may limit capacity at test centers. Many organizations have chosen to connect MTEL licensure requirements with admission processes or as checkpoints to progress throughout the program. We continue to encourage organizations to [approach existing policies regarding these requirements with flexibility](#), given that some candidates will not have access to complete the assessments in alignment with original timelines. As a reminder, the MTEL is a licensure requirement, and DESE does not have a pass rate requirement in place or require that candidates pass an MTEL exam to successfully complete a state approved educator preparation program. In addition to testing at our testing centers, the online proctoring option continues to be available for many of our MTEs (see more information [here](#)). Organizations should also consider the [alternative assessment pilot](#) with either the development of an alternative assessment at your organization and/or ensuring your candidates are aware of the pilot.
- **Identifying and Supporting Candidates at risk:** While processes for identifying and supporting individuals at risk of meeting expectations may look different when engaging in a remote or hybrid setting, organizations are still expected to have a process in place to identify candidates throughout the program (i.e., during coursework, pre-practicum, practicum). Ultimately, organizations should only endorse candidates for whom there is sufficient evidence of readiness for the licensure role as determined through evidence collected as part of the performance assessment. Organizations are encouraged to apply flexibility and creativity in potential support to candidates determined to be at risk.
- **Endorsement Timelines:** As organizations make proactive and responsive adjustments to their candidates' experience, this may have an impact on the timeline within which candidates are ultimately endorsed (e.g., some candidates may need additional time to get sufficient practice and feedback to demonstrate readiness and extend their program into the following semester). It is within each organization's purview to adjust endorsement timelines as needed.





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- **Subject Matter Knowledge Guidelines:** As per previous guidance, by August 17, 2020, organizations should have either submitted a signed Statements of Assurance and accompanying crosscutting matrices, or submitted a two page plan outlining steps they will take to implement updated expectations. Sponsoring Organizations are expected to continue to fully implement the updated SMK Guidelines. Should plans require a shift, please contact the team at [EducatorPreparation@mass.gov](mailto:EducatorPreparation@mass.gov).

