

Teacher Education Unit Admission Criteria

Context and Rationale

Both for the sake of national accreditation and to meet Minnesota Administrative Rules (MARs) for teacher education programs, it falls on teacher education units to include admission as one of the transition points for passage through teaching programs. Admission standards must be designed to admit individuals with high “potential for success” (MAR, Subpart 5, D (1)). The new admissions matrix shown below comply with the Minnesota Administrative Rules. Especially in this day of high stakes testing, it is important to admit candidates likely to succeed in our programs and who will ultimately prove able to gain Minnesota licensure.

Under MAR subpart 5 (written application), part D (candidate qualifications), we are required to (1) admit candidates with the potential for success, (2) utilize multiple assessments and assessment criteria, and (3) clearly state admission standards and criteria.

Under NCATE/CAEP standard 2 (Assessment, substandard 2), we are required to collect multiple assessments from, not just candidates, but also from applicants. The national accreditation body also that we, “identify candidates with potential to become successful teachers” and, as noted in MARs, multiple measures must be employed.

With the state approval and NCATE accreditation expectations serving as a back drop, the Teacher Education Unit at St. Cloud State University aims to recruit and prepare highly effective teachers. We need teacher candidates with skills and dispositions to instruct at a level that will raise achievement and close the achievement gap. Based on recommendations from the Recruit Working Group and feedback from TEAC, ETEC, and faculty in the Teacher Education Unit a consistent, rigorous Admission Criteria for all teacher candidates at St. Cloud State University was created. Admission considerations will include the following: (1) a minimum GPA of 2.50, (2) satisfactory scores from the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exam (MTLE) Basic Skills, (3) evidence of potential for professional writing skills, (4) evidence of potential for oral communication skills, and (5) successful completion of an Introduction to Education course. The Admission Criteria should be the *minimum* requirements across all teacher education programs at St. Cloud State University; although programs are at liberty to place additional admission requirements on their candidates. Finally, the Admission Criteria should be required for all undergraduate students on a typical path toward graduation and teacher licensure.

Teacher Education Admission Matrix

Score	GPA	MTLE (Basic Skills)	Writing Sample	Interview	Introductory Course
	<i>Cumulative GPA</i>	<i>If taken prior to Sept. 1, 2010, passing Praxis PPST scores will be accepted.</i>	<i>To be completed by the Department/Program.</i>	<i>To be completed by the Department/Program.</i>	<i>CFS 200, ED 200 SPED 200, or ED 300</i>
3	3.25 – 4.00	Score of 240 or above for each of the 3 subtests	Strong professional writing skills with few technical errors	Strong professional communication skills and educational dispositions	A- to A+
2	2.75 – 3.24	Minimum of 220 for each of the 3 subtests	Adequate professional writing skill with minor technical issues	Emerging verbal skills/educational disposition – reasonable potential for success	B- to B+
1	2.50 – 2.74	Minimum of 200 for each of the 3 subtests	Needs support services for improvement	Needs support services for improvement	C- to C+
0	2.49 or lower	199 and below for any subtest or no attempt	Major writing issues, needs significant support services	Significant communication or disposition concerns requiring significant support services	D or lower
<i>Note: A zero in any of the 5 categories will result in an automatic denial of entry into Teacher Education.</i>					

The proposed matrix shows how each of the components work together to give a broad, comprehensive overview of the quality of candidates entering the program, and to help identify strong candidates who have the potential to become effective teachers.

By using multiple measures, we also see that a candidate can have strengths and weaknesses in any category without being totally eliminated from the program. These criteria will give the teacher education programs the benefit of higher academic standards while at the same time flexibility in the number of pathways into the program.

A combined score of 9 is required for Admission into the program. A score of 0 on any of the criteria would mean automatic denial of entry into the teacher education programs. Students, however, can appeal admission decisions by following regular University appeals processes or they can remediate and re-apply.

Admission Criteria Rationale:

The recommended Admission Criteria expand on current requirements and introduce several new requirements.

1. GPA

GPA is the most widely used admission criterion for teacher education programs (Basom, Rush & Machell, 1994; Lawrence & Crehan, 2001; Mikitovics & Crehan, 2002; Riggs, Riggs & Sandlin, 1992). Since it is a measure academic ability, it is thought to predict success in the instructional parts of the programs, and it is readily available from a student's transcript(s) (Casey & Childs, 2007). Currently at SCSU, the average GPA of education students is around 3.2. A common belief is that raising the required GPA will prevent STEM students from being admitted to teacher education. In the past 5 semesters, of the 61 students who applied to student teach, only 1 student had a GPA below 2.5 and in fact, only 12 had a GPA less than 3.0.

The table below depicts the minimum entry GPA requirements at sister institutions in the region. Setting the required GPA at 2.5 places St. Cloud State University at the bottom of this list.

Minimum GPA at other Area Universities

Minnesota State University, Mankato	3.00
Minnesota State University, Moorhead	2.75
Winona State University	2.75
Valley City State University	2.75
University of South Dakota	2.60

2. MTLE (Basic Skills)

Most teacher education programs in the United States use the results from standardized tests (e.g., Praxis I: Pre-Professional Skills Tests) in their selection processes to measure a student's basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics (Casey & Childs, 2007). There is a need for earlier testing of the Basic Skills components of the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exams (MTLE). Ideally, the Basic Skills should be attempted prior to Admission for early detection and remediation (particularly in our high need/targeted areas for recruitment). This criterion and its placement at Admission has several key benefits. First, it will act as a screening method to help identify students with lower academic/basic skills and allow these students to make appropriate alternate program choices earlier in their time at SCSU. The second benefit is the ability to identify and provide remedial support for students who are within reasonable attainment of a passing score. Finally, we can provide extra support to individuals within our targeted areas for recruitment (i.e., Science, Technology, Mathematics, Special Education, English Language Learners, people of color, males in the lower grades).

Currently the unit requires that candidates take the MTLE Basic Skills for admission to the program and pass them prior to student teaching; although many sister institutions require

passing prior to admission. Our requirement provides us the flexibility to provide remedial assistance to those candidates who demonstrate potential to be effective teachers without delaying the academic progress of these candidates, already in the program pipeline.

3. Writing Sample

A writing sample, typically consisting of responses to questions about experiences and interest in teaching, is a widely used admission criterion for entrance into teacher education programs (Casey & Childs, 2007). Caskey, Peterson, & Temple (2001) suggest that a writing sample can show (1) motivation related to student needs, as opposed to self interests, (2) alignment with the philosophy or mission of a teacher education program, (3) a vision of need or quality in schools, and (4) an ability to express oneself in a convincing manner. Writing samples should provide opportunities for a student to demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are required for entrance into the program (Casey & Childs, 2007). Currently, the Department of Child and Family Studies collects a writing sample from their students and uses a rubric to evaluate writing competencies.

4. Interview

Effective teachers must also possess strong communication skills. Effective communicators are likely to be more effective teachers (Stronge, Tucker, & Hindman, 2004). Verbal ability is an indicator of teacher effectiveness; it relates to how well a teacher conveys concepts and skills to students (Darling-Hammond, 2001). The students of teachers with strong communication skills learn more than students taught by teachers with lower communication skills (Haycock, 2000; Rowan, Chiang, & Miller, 1997; Thomas B. Fordham Foundation, 1999). An interview provides an opportunity for the teacher education program to collect information about a student's language proficiency, attitudes, and interpersonal skills, in addition to the information that can be collected from a writing sample (Denner, Salzman, & Newsome, 2001). The Department of Child and Family Studies and Kinesiology currently conduct interviews of their students and use a rubric to evaluate communication skills.

5. Introductory Course

An examination of student performance in the Introductory Courses is another method of raising the caliber of teacher candidates. The minimum grade, utilizing standards-based grading techniques, in the Introductory Course should be at least a 'C-.' This can be another vital piece of information in assessing the potential of candidates entering the teacher education programs and the field of education. Since these courses are exploratory in nature, student performance tells us about their motivation and interests related to future career goals in

teaching. The matrix allows us to reward academic excellence in these courses, without eliminating those students for whom the course was more difficult.