COOPERATING TEACHER HANDBOOK
STUDENT TEACHER
UTeach-Liberal Arts (UTLA)
University of Texas at Austin

COOPERATING TEACHER (CT)

A cooperating teacher is an educator who is collaboratively assigned by the educator preparation program (EPP) and campus administrator; who has at least three years of teaching experience; who is an accomplished educator as shown by student learning; who has completed cooperating teacher training by the EPP within three weeks of being assigned to a clinical teacher; who is currently certified in the certification category for the clinical teaching assignment for which the clinical teacher candidate is seeking certification; who guides, assists, and supports the candidate during the candidate's clinical teaching in areas such as planning, classroom management, instruction, assessment, working with parents, obtaining materials, district policies; and who reports the candidate's progress to that candidate's field supervisor.

FIELD EXPERIENCES

Field experiences are an integral component of the UTeach-Liberal Arts Program and are built on strong collaborations with school districts. These experiences involve the observation of elementary, middle, and high school classrooms, and are designed to be sequential, cumulative, and performance-based, while preparing our graduates to implement and evaluate effective practices with diverse student populations. Our future teachers engage in field experiences that assist them in mastering their subject knowledge and pedagogical skills, learning how to work collaboratively with stakeholders, developing dispositions to be active citizens, and offering students the opportunity to develop these characteristics themselves.

REQUIRED COURSEWORK FOR STUDENT TEACHER

UTL 360 - Problems/Principles of Secondary Education
Student teaching is a learning experience that helps the student teacher develop or improve the skills needed for effective teaching. UTL 360 and 670 are the last courses student teachers take prior to certification. It is during the student teaching experience that most students will fully develop their skills in classroom and behavior management.

UTL 670 - Directed Teaching in Secondary Schools
The UTL 670 Secondary School Teaching Practicum involves 65 consecutive full teaching days, Monday through Friday. Student teaching begins after the student teacher has completed the district’s student teaching orientation. In tandem with UTL 670, student teachers are also enrolled in UTL 360 Practicum Seminar, which consists of 45 hours of class time on the UT-Austin campus. UTL 360 is conducted on Thursday evenings from 5:00pm – 8:00pm.
RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENT TEACHER

- Contact cooperating teacher before or at the beginning of the semester to make introductions and schedule observation time.
- Recognize and accept that the cooperating teacher has the ultimate responsibility for what may or may not be done in the classroom.
- Know and follow the rules, regulations, and policies of the district and school, including irregularities in the schedule.
- Maintain an ethical and professional attitude. This includes a professional relationship with students, teachers, and administrators, professional dress, arriving with sufficient time to prepare, and utilizing discretion regarding students’ confidential information.
- Be available for regular planning and feedback sessions with the cooperating teacher and field supervisor.
- Submit lesson plans in advance of observations and share copies with the cooperating teacher and field supervisor if being observed.
- Record and complete Attendance Documentation form with cooperating teacher’s signature and return to UTLA instructor by the last UTL 360 class meeting.
- Use e-mail to communicate with cooperating teacher, UTLA instructor and field supervisor.
- Wear the UTLA lanyard and badge during the student teaching experience.
- Become familiar with the school climate and culture, and when possible, become acquainted with campus teachers, administrators, and staff.
- Follow all university, UTLA, district, and campus policies, regulations, and guidelines. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action and termination from the program.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF COOPERATING TEACHER WITH A STUDENT TEACHER

- Supervise the student teacher for 65 consecutive full teaching days and serve as a teaching model for the UTLA student.
- Phase in the classroom responsibilities of the student teacher. The student teacher should not be left alone in the classroom for an extended period of time or on a regular basis until the cooperating teacher and student teacher agree on this decision.
- Allow the student teacher primary responsibility for classroom management while providing support when necessary.
- Phase in student teachers to take over a minimum of 2 classes for a six-week period, including lesson planning and grading.
- Meet with your student teacher to plan and schedule lessons.
- Require lesson plans from the student teacher in advance of teaching assignments, in addition to following all district and campus policies regarding lesson plan submission.
- Evaluate required lessons taught by your student teacher by observing the taught lesson and completing the appropriate observation form.
- Plan time to debrief and provide feedback to the student teacher about the lessons they have taught.
- Complete formative and summative evaluations and meet with the student teacher and field supervisor for the formative and summative conferences.
- Verify with a signature and date that you have completed cooperating teacher training and have read the roles and responsibilities of a cooperating teacher.
- Communicate with the UTLA instructor at the first indication of problems.
- Use e-mail to communicate with your student teacher, UTLA instructor, and field supervisor (if applicable).
- Meet deadlines as established by UTLA.

**BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENT TEACHER**

The student teacher will contact you and schedule their first observation at the beginning of the semester. Below are suggestions to help the student teacher become an accepted member of the professional staff of the campus.
- Exchange all contact information in case of emergencies.
- Introduce the student teacher to other campus teachers, office personnel, and your students.
- Have curriculum materials available for the student teacher to use.
- Provide a small workspace.
- Provide the student teacher some background on the district, campus, and students in your classroom.
- Get to know each other as individuals by discussing backgrounds, interests, hobbies, and concerns.
- Answer any questions about policy or regulations the student teacher might have.

**LEAVING THE CLASSROOM**

It is suggested that you not leave the classroom until you are confident that the student teacher can handle the particular teaching assignment planned. Even then, the length of time you leave the classroom should be brief during the early stages in the student teaching experience. Until the student teacher has developed adequate classroom management and teaching skills, it is suggested that you stay near the classroom when leaving the student teacher alone. The welfare of the students should take priority.

**REQUIRED OBSERVATIONS**

Regular observation of your student teacher accompanied by feedback is the most important task. You should formally document your student teacher teaching four times. If you feel that the student teacher needs more formal observations, contact the UTLA instructor with a rationale.

**SCHEDULING OBSERVATIONS**

Having both scheduled and random observations is essential to the development of student teachers. It is suggested to schedule some observations with the student teacher and to also observe at other random times. This allows the CT to observe student teachers at their best and how they usually teach.
Dates for the formative and summative observation will be scheduled by the student teacher with the CT’s approval. The CT and field supervisor are required to observe and evaluate the same lesson and then participate in a debriefing session together with the student teacher. The debriefing session is scheduled time after the observation.

**OBSERVATION FORMS**

Observation forms serve as the official documentation of each student’s required observations for teacher certification. These forms are used to summarize and record the results of each observation and debriefing session. The observation forms below can be provided by the student or downloaded from the UTLA website to be used to observe the student teacher.

- UTL 360/670 Observation Form
- Formative Observation Assessment
- Summative Observation Assessment

**EVALUATING AND RECORDING OBSERVATIONS**

Cooperating teachers will evaluate the student teaching their lesson using the appropriate form. CTs will rate each observable behavior and cite specific examples as supporting evidence.

When observing and evaluating the student teacher a variety of methods can be used to record one’s thoughts such as scripting, checklists, T-charts, etc. CTs should identify the student’s strengths, successes, areas of concern, and how they may improve. It is very beneficial to the student teacher if comments about the lesson are also included.

**DEBRIEFING SESSION**

After informal observations, a debriefing session will be conducted to provide feedback about the lesson taught. The debriefing session should occur between 30 to 45 minutes. Evaluators will discuss with the student teacher the student teacher’s strengths, areas of concern, and ways to improve in preparation for the next lesson. When completed, the student teacher, evaluator and UTLA instructor will receive a copy of the observation form.

After the formative and summative observation, the student, CT, and field supervisor will schedule a conference to discuss the observed lesson. These observations and debriefing sessions are required for teacher certification. It is important that the following information is recorded on the observation forms: name of student, date, start and stop time, and signatures. The student teacher, CT, and field supervisor will all receive a copy of these forms.

**INDIVIDUAL GROWTH PLAN**

When a student teacher is struggling, the UTLA instructor has the option to develop an Individual Growth Plan (IGP) to help improve the student teacher’s skills. Anyone working with a student may refer the student for evaluation at any time. If you choose to refer a student, contact the UTLA instructor and provide rationale and documentation. This documentation is vital if the student is dropped or fails the course.
The IGP identifies weaknesses and provides a description of performance issues, target goals, deadlines, and consequences for failing to meet those goals. It is important to keep accurate records of observations and feedback sessions for your student teacher. The UTLA instructor will meet with the student teacher to review and monitor the student’s progress and discuss the results of the IGP.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHING AND THE STUDENT TEACHER

School districts in the area have different policies when it comes to substitute teaching. During student teaching, the UTLA policy is that UTLA student teachers do not substitute. If they are paid for substitute teaching during this period of time, these days will not be counted toward their required 65 days of student teaching. After student teaching is complete, student teachers are free to be paid substitutes for any school district.