



**STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Elementary Education**  
**Special Education**  
**Early Childhood Education**

University of Southern Indiana  
8600 University Boulevard  
Evansville, IN 47712  
(812) 465-7024

## Introduction

Welcome to teacher education at USI. This handbook is intended to give you basic information about the elementary education major, and it is designed to serve as a supplement to the *University Bulletin*. As a college student, you must take responsibility for your own education. You must learn all you can about your major, the University Core Curriculum, and University policies and procedures. You should keep track of the classes you have taken, and you should plan ahead for future semesters. Before you enroll in a class, you should check its pre-requisites, and you should know how it counts toward the degree requirements. It is not expected that this handbook or the *University Bulletin* will answer all of your questions; therefore, we encourage you to establish a relationship with your advisor.

Another valuable tool for you is MY USI. You have access to most of your college records through MY USI. You can find your advisor's name and email address. You can run a "DARS" report, a Degree Audit, which shows you exactly what classes you need for your major.

We also encourage you to visit our department's website frequently. It contains a lot of information that you need to know. You can access this site from the USI homepage, or you may go to [www.usi.edu/educ/teach](http://www.usi.edu/educ/teach)

## Questions about Classes

### What classes should I take?

First semester freshmen must enroll in the English class and the math class indicated by the placement test results. If you try to take classes for which you are not prepared, you will not be successful. You should continue to take an English course and a math course each semester until you have completed ENG 101, 201 and MATH 106, 206, and 226. (Note: The required courses in Mathematics are different for Special Education and Early Childhood Education majors.)

The remainder of your courses in your freshmen year will come from the University Core Curriculum. It is a good idea to take a variety of courses. In addition to your English and math courses, courses in communications studies, science, the arts, history, and social science would all count toward the Core requirements and would keep your studies interesting and varied. (See suggested courses for freshmen on page 8.) It is also important to keep your class schedule balanced. For many students, it is a better idea to have their courses spread as evenly as possible over all five days of the week, rather than trying to fit all of the courses into two or three days.

Even though your "school day" may seem shorter than the traditional high school day, you should be aware that college courses are more difficult and time-consuming. They require a great deal of work outside of class, and it takes self-discipline to balance your studies, your home responsibilities, your job, and your social life.

### How many hours should I take?

A full-time load consists of 12 to 18 credit hours, however, many students find that a 12 to 15 hour schedule is very demanding. If you work more than 10 hours a week, you might need to lessen your course load. If you work 30 hours or more each week, you should consider being a part-time student. Some scholarships and financial aid packages require that you complete a minimum number of hours each semester. Be sure to check with the Financial Assistance Office (464-1767) if you have any questions.

**Is attendance in class important?**

Yes. Even if the instructor does not take attendance, you have to be in class to understand the instructor's expectations and to learn the material. Borrowing someone's notes or just reading the textbook is not a substitute for being in class. Try to get acquainted with someone in each of your classes so you can get the notes if you have to miss a class due to illness or other unavoidable circumstances.

**What should I do if I have a problem with a course?**

The best plan of action begins with the instructor. As soon as you realize there is a problem, you should make arrangements to meet with him or her during office hours to discuss your situation. Most problems can be resolved through conversation. If the problem is not resolved, you should see your advisor. He or she can help direct your next step.

**When and how can I drop a course?**

There are different procedures to follow depending upon the time of the semester in which you drop a class. This information is available on the USI website, and it is printed in the *Schedule of Classes*. You can also check with the Registrar's Office (first floor of the Orr Center). If you receive financial aid or if you are on a scholarship, you should check to see if dropping a course would affect your eligibility.

**Questions about My Major****Why does my major say "Pre-Elementary Education?"**

The designation as a "pre-elementary" (or pre-special education or pre-early childhood education) indicates that you intend to major in education, but you have not been admitted to teacher education. Admission to teacher education is a process that you will go through after in your sophomore year. You will learn more about the admission process in EDUC 196.

**How long am I a pre-major?**

You should apply for admission to the teacher education program when you have passed the Praxis I exam, when you are enrolled in, or have completed 55 hours of coursework, and when you have a 2.75 GPA. There are also specific courses that you must have completed. The Admission Checklist is on page 8 of this booklet. The application for admission to teacher education is available online and in ED 3114.

**When do I take my first Education course?**

The first education course for all education majors is EDUC 196. You must have a Freshmen-2 status, and you must have completed ENG 201 before you take EDUC 196. Beginning with EDUC 196, you can expect to do some type of field experience in almost all of the education classes. The number of required hours varies, depending on the course. You can check with the instructor and/or your advisor if you have questions about specific courses.

You will be assigned to field experiences at a variety of local schools, in a variety of grade levels. It is important for you to have experience in many different kinds of schools, if possible. Our department has outstanding working relationships with many local schools, and your visits to these schools will enhance your understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

### **What is involved in the admission process?**

The first thing you should do is to read the directions on the “Admission to Teacher Education” packet. You should have the office staff fill out the verification of your hours and GPA, and then you should make an appointment with the Student Wellness office (464-1807) for the speech and hearing check. Next you should make an appointment to see your advisor to fill in the courses you have taken and compute your GPA in the major. Your advisor will also double-check to be sure that your Praxis I scores are in your file. Once all of the paper work has been submitted, you will be notified by mail of your acceptance to teacher education.

### **What are the due dates for applying for admission to Teacher Education?**

It takes several weeks to process the applications for Admission to Teacher Education, and you will not be allowed to enroll in any education course numbered 350 or higher until you have been admitted. Applications are due on March 15 (to enroll for summer and fall), June 15 (to enroll for fall), and October 15 (to enroll for spring).

### **How do transfer students apply for admission to Teacher Education?**

The same standards for admission apply to transfer students. Students who transfer 55 or more hours and have passed all three sections of the Praxis I may be provisionally accepted into the teacher education program for one semester if their past course of study so warrants, as determined by the department chair. Be sure to check with your advisor concerning other requirements.

### **What is a Block?**

Later in your program, you will have an option to take a group of classes together called a Block. The Blocks are optional, but most often a Block provides an opportunity for students to work collaboratively and to have an intensive field experience in local schools. There are Block experiences in the elementary, special education, and middle school programs. Your advisor will have more information about specific courses that are taught in a Block format.

## **Questions about my Advisor**

### **Who is my advisor?**

Advisees are assigned so that the numbers of students are distributed evenly among the faculty. You can find out who your advisor is by looking on MY USI.

### **When should I see my advisor?**

You should see your advisor whenever you have questions about the teacher education program, if you need to drop or add a class, and when you apply for program admission. You can also see your advisor any time you have questions about university policies and procedures. It is a good idea to meet with your advisor periodically to plan future semesters and to keep track of your progress toward the degree. Prior to contacting your advisor, please check the *University Bulletin* regarding your question.

### **What if my advisor isn't in when I need to see him/her?**

Please refer to the contact information posted on each advisor's office door. You may see another advisor who is on duty, or someone in the front office can assist you.

## Questions about Early Registration

### When is early registration?

Early registration for the spring semester is held during the first two weeks of November. Early registration for summer and fall is held during the first two weeks of April. There are notices sent through MY USI to remind you to register. The registration dates are also listed in the *Schedule of Classes* newspaper. The *Schedule of Classes* contains other important information about the registration process, as well. Please see your advisor at least two weeks prior to registration.

### How do I get an appointment for early registration?

You do not need an appointment, but there are certain days on which you are eligible to register. You will have the best selection of classes if you register on your first day of eligibility.

**FRESHMEN MUST SEE THEIR ADVISOR BEFORE THEY CAN REGISTER FOR THE NEXT TERM.** (You are a freshman if you have completed fewer than 32 hours of college credit.) Please do not wait until the week of early registration to see your advisor.

## Questions about Minors

### Why should I get a minor?

A minor (or endorsement) is an area of specialization in addition to the elementary degree. Although not required, we encourage elementary education students to pursue a minor because it broadens your background and increases your marketability. All minors require additional courses.

### What minors are available?

Minors are available in Special Education, Language Arts, Mathematics, Reading, Science, Social Studies, Computer, French, German, Spanish, Visual Arts, Physical Education, Health and Safety, and Coaching. Elementary education majors may also complete the Junior/High Middle School licensing requirements in addition to a teaching minor and be qualified to teach that subject in grades 5-9. Course listings for each minor are provided in the University Handbook and/or available from the Department of Teacher Education.

## Questions about the Praxis Exams

The Praxis Series was developed to provide a system of thorough, fair, and carefully validated tests for states to use as part of the teacher licensure process. The Praxis I (also known as the PPST) is a basic skills test that you take in your sophomore year. The Praxis II exam is specific to your major, and it should be taken in the semester prior to student teaching. Please visit the Teaching and Learning Web site at [www.ets.org/praxis](http://www.ets.org/praxis)

### Praxis I

#### What is the Praxis I (PPST – Pre-Professional Skills Test)?

The Praxis I is a standardized test which is designed to be taken early in your college career to measure your reading, writing, and math skills. The assessment is available in two formats, a paper-based test or a computer-based test.

**When should I take the Praxis I?**

You should take the Praxis I early in your college career or once you have completed English 201 and Math 106. You must meet the scores in all three sections of the Praxis I prior to admission to teacher education.

**How do I register for the Praxis I?**

As with the SAT or ACT, registration for the Praxis I paper-based test is handled directly with Praxis. There are limited test dates, and registration must be completed well in advance. You may register on the Praxis web site. Remember to request to have your scores sent directly to USI.

The computer-based version of the Praxis I can be taken at the Prometric Testing Center at 923 S. Kenmore on the eastside of Evansville. You can make an appointment by calling (812) 479-6855.

**What scores do I need for the Praxis I?**

The required scores for the Praxis I are as follows: Math 175, Reading 176, and Writing 172.

**What if I don't pass the Praxis I?**

If you do not pass one or more sections of the Praxis I, you will receive a letter from the department that explains the remedial programs that are available on campus. Preparing for the Praxis I exam is similar to preparing for a running marathon; if you want to succeed, you must be diligent in your efforts over a period of time.

**The Praxis II****What is the Praxis II Specialty Area Test?**

The Praxis II measures your knowledge in the subject in which you are receiving certification (Elementary Education). You do not need to take the Praxis II in the area of your minor. The procedure for registration is the same as for the Praxis I.

**When should I take the Praxis II?**

You should take the Praxis II after you have completed most of your methods courses. Late in the semester just prior to student teaching is an ideal time to take the Praxis II.

**Questions about Student Teaching****When do I sign up for student teaching?**

There is a mandatory meeting held each fall semester for anyone who plans to student teach in the next school year. All of your questions about student teaching and the application process will be addressed at that meeting. Applications for student teaching are available online, and they are due in mid-January. Do not procrastinate with this application. It must be error-free because it goes out to school principals and your host teacher. If your application is submitted late, your placement cannot be guaranteed. **YOU ALSO MUST BE ADMITTED TO TEACHER EDUCATION BEFORE YOU APPLY FOR ADMISSION TO STUDENT TEACHING.**

### **Do I have to student teach in Evansville?**

No, you don't. There are many surrounding school corporations that host our student teachers. Some students who live in a nearby community choose to student teach closer to home. The rule of thumb is that the school has to be within a 50-mile radius of USI so that our supervisors can observe your teaching, and so you will be able to attend the required synthesis course that meets on Monday nights.

### **Can I work while I student teach?**

Student teaching is a huge commitment and a full-time job in itself. You will be surprised by how much of your time and energy it consumes. We encourage students not to work during their student teaching semester; however, some students choose to work on weekends.

### **When will I be notified of my student teaching placement?**

You will receive a letter several weeks prior to the school year in which you have applied for student teaching.

## **Questions about the Teacher Education Portfolio**

### **What is the Teacher Education Portfolio?**

A portfolio is a collection of your work over time. You will learn about the teacher education portfolio in the introductory education classes (EDUC 196 and EDUC 201/202). During the professional semester (student teaching) you will create a presentation portfolio which you will be able to use during job interviews. The requirements for the portfolio are somewhat flexible, and it is difficult to know in advance which course projects and assignments will best demonstrate your professional knowledge. The portfolio process will be easier if you are organized. You will want to keep things on a flash drive or similar electronic storage system.

## **Questions about Scholarships**

### **How do I find out about scholarships in Teacher Education?**

There are many scholarships available through the department of teacher education. A listing of these scholarships may be found in ED 1104. Most of the scholarships are awarded annually at Honor's Day late in the spring semester. Please check with the school office in late November to inquire about the various scholarships and the application process.

## **Questions about Graduation**

### **Can I get through this program in four years?**

All bachelor degrees in the department of teacher education require 124 hours of coursework, which averages out to 31 hours per year. Yes, you can finish the degree in four years if you do not need developmental courses. If you add an endorsement/minor, you will need to take very full semesters and/or attend summer school to finish in four years.

### **What is "senior check out?"**

Senior checkout is the process by which we verify your coursework and determine if you are eligible for a degree. The senior checkout form will indicate which classes you still need to complete in order to earn the degree. You should make an appointment for senior checkout with the office staff two semesters before your projected date of completion of the program.

## **USI Teacher Education**

### **Freshmen Course Selection**

**Directions:** Freshmen are required to take a math course and an English course their first semester, and they must take the math and English courses that are indicated by university placement exams and/or other admissions criteria. In addition to those courses, students should select a class from 3-4 different areas. It is recommended that a student who has a heavy work schedule or other commitments or needs developmental preparation not exceed four courses.

These are suggested Core courses for freshmen. Refer to the *University Bulletin* for program requirements, course descriptions, and university policies.

\* Indicates a developmental level course

#### **English (Required 1<sup>st</sup> Semester )**

Choose course indicated by placement test  
GENS 098\*, ENG 100\*, or ENG 101

#### **Mathematics (Required 1<sup>st</sup> Semester)**

Choose course indicated by placement test  
GENS 097\*, MATH 100\*, or MATH 106

Note: The MATH sequence continues with MATH 206, 226 for elementary majors.  
Requirements for early childhood and special education are different.

#### **Language Arts**

CMST 101 or CMST 107

#### **The Arts (See list of additional B2 courses in the University Bulletin )**

ENG 105, ENG 285, ART 201, MUS 202, THTR 101

#### **Science (See list of additional C3 courses in the University Bulletin )**

Recommended only if student is prepared for university reading load.  
BIOL 105 (L), CHEM 103, CHEM 107 (L), GEOG 112, GEOL 101, GEOL 115, PHYS 101

#### **Social Sciences (See list of additional C2 courses in the University Bulletin )**

Recommended only if student is prepared for university reading load.  
ANTH 101, ECON 175, POLS 101 or 102, SOC 121, PSY 201

#### **History**

Recommended only if student is prepared for university reading load.  
HIST 101, 102, 111, or 112

#### **Developmental Reading (If indicated by Placement Tests)**

GENS 099\* or GENS 151\*

## ADMISSION TO TEACHER EDUCATION CHECKLIST

**Please note: Before your status is changed from “pre-elementary” to elementary, you must meet these requirements, and you must complete an application for admission. The applications are available online.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Completed or enrolled in 55 Quality Hours

\_\_\_\_\_ Completed Pre-admission Course Requirements with a Grade of C or better. **List grades.**

\_\_\_\_\_ English 101

\_\_\_\_\_ English 201

\_\_\_\_\_ Math 106 (Math 108 or 111 for secondary special education majors)

\_\_\_\_\_ Communication Studies 101 or 107

\_\_\_\_\_ Education 196

\_\_\_\_\_ Education 201, 242, or 202

\_\_\_\_\_ Philosophy 200 or Philosophy 201

\_\_\_\_\_ Any Science course that meets Core Curriculum requirements

\_\_\_\_\_ Any Social Science or History course that meets Core Curriculum requirements

\_\_\_\_\_ Any Humanities course that meets Core Curriculum requirements

\_\_\_\_\_ 2.75 GPA in Major

\_\_\_\_\_ 2.75 GPA in Minor

\_\_\_\_\_ 2.75 GPA Cumulative

\_\_\_\_\_ Speech and Hearing Test

\_\_\_\_\_ Praxis I Exam

\_\_\_\_\_ Reading (176 min.) \_\_\_\_\_ Writing (172 min.) \_\_\_\_\_ Math (175 min.)

\_\_\_\_\_ Satisfactory Field Experience Reports EDUC 196 and 201

\_\_\_\_\_ Transcript Evaluation (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_ Interview in department of major with advisor