

Practicum Guidelines for Teacher Candidates Completing a Virtual or Remote Practicum

The purpose of these guidelines is to assist teacher candidates and associate teachers in navigating through a virtual or remote practicum experience. They must be used in conjunction with all applicable Practicum Handbook content.

Types of Practicum

In-class Practicum – refers to practicum that takes place with an associate teacher, in a school, in a “traditional” classroom.

Virtual Practicum – refers to practicum that takes place with an associate teacher, in a school, in a classroom, while the learners all tune in virtually from their homes.

Remote Practicum – refers to practicum that takes place from the teacher candidate’s home, using the teacher candidate’s computer, with the associate teacher supervising the teacher candidate virtually, while the learners tune in virtually from their homes or from a classroom.

Hybrid Practicum – refers to practicum that takes place with an associate teacher, in a school, in a classroom, while some of the instruction is provided face-to-face and some of the instruction is provided virtually.

Overall Expectations of Teacher Candidates

Refer to the Overall Expectations of Teacher Candidates outlined in the Practicum Handbook. If you have difficulty determining what the appropriate amount of instruction is in a virtual or remote practicum, use the following table as a guide.

Teacher candidates in Year 1 will generally require more guidance and support in lesson planning than those in Year 2. Because online learning is still somewhat new, modules should be co-designed with your associate teacher until they are confident in your abilities.

Virtual or Remote Practicum (fully online)	
If your associate teacher is responsible for online instruction, follow these guidelines (in conjunction with the overall expectations outlined in the Practicum Handbook).	
50% instructional responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your associate teacher is creating modules/units to be completed asynchronously by the learners, you are expected to develop 50% of the modules. • If your associate teacher is teaching synchronously, you are expected to plan and implement 50% of the synchronous sessions. • If modules have already been created by your associate teacher, you are expected to perform the role of the associate teacher such as moderating discussions, assisting the learners, marking assignments, etc.
75% instructional responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your associate teacher is creating modules/units to be completed asynchronously by the learners, you are expected to develop 75% of the modules. • If your associate teacher is teaching synchronously, you are expected to plan and implement 75% of the synchronous sessions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If modules have already been created by your associate teacher, you are expected to perform the role of the associate teacher such as moderating discussions, assisting the learners, marking assignments, etc.
100% instructional responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your associate teacher is creating modules/units to be completed asynchronously by the learners, you are expected to develop 100% of the modules. If your associate teacher is teaching synchronously, you are expected to plan and implement 100% of the synchronous sessions. If modules have already been created by your associate teacher, you are expected to perform the role of the associate teacher such as moderating discussions, assisting the learners, marking assignments, etc.

Hybrid Practicum (online and face-to-face)

If your associate teacher is responsible for online and face-to-face instruction, follow these guidelines (in conjunction with the overall expectations outlined in the Practicum Handbook).

50% instructional responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement 50% of the online modules/unit/lesson. Plan and implement lessons for 50% of face-to-face instruction. Participating in both will provide you with experience in the classroom and online.
75% instructional responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement 75% of the online modules/unit/lesson. Plan and implement lessons for 75% of face-to-face instruction. Participating in both will provide you with experience in the classroom and online.
100% instructional responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement 100% of the online modules/unit/lesson. Plan and implement lessons for 100% of face-to-face instruction. Participating in both will provide you with experience in the classroom and online.

In either scenario, to the best of your ability, you must perform the same duties as a classroom teacher. For example,

- Spend much of your practicum teaching the full class. One-on-one work with the learners (e.g., with learners with exceptionalities or ELL learners), while valuable, should comprise only a small portion of your teaching.
- Discuss with your associate teacher the workload expectations related to an online practicum. It is important to know as much as possible about online teaching. What does it look like? What does it sound like?
- Refrain from contacting individual learners outside of school hours. If it is necessary for you to contact an individual learner regarding coursework, draft your email and ask your associate teacher to forward it to the student using their board-approved email/LMS system.
- Whether online or in person, you must not be left unsupervised with the learners, nor may you act as a supply teacher.

School Arrival/Departure

Teacher candidates completing a virtual/remote placement are expected to be available for 30 minutes prior to the start of the school day, and for 30 minutes at the end of the school day. Additional time may be required for feedback/consultation with the associate teacher. Teacher candidates wishing to visit the school must first speak with their associate teacher about school and/or board policies for entry and departure of board properties during COVID.

Active Observation

It is important for teacher candidates to actively observe the many components of the program as established by their associate teacher, particularly in a classroom where there is extensive individual programming, the use of learning centres, and/or co-operative learning. This is also expected of teacher candidates placed in, or who transition to, online teaching situations. Classroom teachers must coordinate and develop teaching strategies and environments for online learners, and teacher candidates are expected to actively observe the structure and delivery of online learning environments.

Teacher candidates are not passive observers. Whether in-person or virtually, they are expected to engage in the learning environment, assist with classroom routines and duties, provide individual help to learners, become familiar with classroom resources and organization, and assist with other school-related responsibilities.

Teacher candidates are required to maintain observation notes for each setting observed and to file their notes in the appropriate section of the practicum binder. Professors may also assign observation activities as a requirement for some courses.

Teacher Candidate Checklist for Success

- Check your internet connection. Do you have a plan should you encounter connectivity issues? Determine a way to contact your associate teacher should you lose internet connectivity.
- As soon as you have your placement, determine what online educational platform your school board uses and request access. Review available tutorials and/or research the platform using Google.
- Obtain a copy of your school's online teaching guidelines. Your associate teacher should be able to provide this information to you as they are required to follow the same guidelines. Also, refer to the Ontario College of Teachers' guidelines for video conferencing: <https://www.oct.ca/resources/advisories/video-conferencing-guidelines>.
- Be flexible and forgiving. When pivoting to an online format, everyone will be under stress and may be unable to provide you with immediate answers and guidance. Further, try to be as independent as possible.
- Recognize that the learners working online may also be sharing space with, and getting support from, their parents, caregivers, and/or siblings.
- Ensure you have access to any e-books that your associate teacher and the learners are using (e.g., textbooks, novels).
- Online learning is very different from face-to-face learning as it tends to favour tasks that require a high level of self-direction. Design learning experiences that have clear instructions with easily accessible resources.
- If learning is asynchronous, determine if your associate teacher has check-in points, or meeting days, with the learners. You are expected to be present for those types of meetings.
- It is better to record any direct teaching sessions rather than live streaming them but keep the videos short.

Professional Online Communication

When communicating online, always use appropriate language that reflects the professional standards of the teaching profession and consider the following:

- Refrain from contacting individual learners outside of school hours. If it is necessary to contact an individual learner regarding coursework, draft an email and ask your associate teacher to forward it to the student using their board-approved email/LMS system.
- Remember your virtual class/meeting may be recorded. Be aware of your language and refrain from slang and/or making inappropriate comments which could become public.
- Be careful with humour. Building a rapport with the learners is important, but this becomes trickier in an online setting, as it can be more difficult to ascertain when humour is perceived as appropriate or offensive.
- Save a record of all communication/online interactions.
- Use your Nipissing email address for all communication related to your practicum.
- Be aware of your virtual "background." Keep your background as neutral and professional as possible. Remove any offensive or inappropriate items that could be observed by the learners.
- Immediately report all instances of cyberbullying to your associate teacher. Do not attempt to resolve the issue on your own.
- Don't share personal information that you would not want to be made public.
- Practice and model good "netiquette" (online education best practices). Below is a set of expectations that describes appropriate behaviours when interacting online:
 - Appreciate the diversity and different communication styles of your audience.
 - Present ideas appropriately. Don't use offensive language.
 - Be cautious in using Internet language. For example, avoid capitalizing all letters as this suggests shouting. Also, avoid "flaming," or attacking someone online, such as with insults and name-calling.
 - Avoid using vernacular and/or slang language. This could possibly lead to misinterpretation.

- Share tips with the learners.
- Ask for feedback from your associate teacher, faculty advisor, and the learners.
- Refer to academic literature as a foundation for your commentaries.
- Dress professionally. Avoid being online in your PJs and with bed hair.
- Respect the privacy of your audience. Find out if your school/school board permits the use of use of computer cameras.
- Make certain that your work area is free from distractions (e.g., TV is turned off, dog isn't barking, phones are turned off).

References & Other Helpful Resources

Mintu-Wimsatt, A., Kernek, C., & Lozada, H. R. (2010). Netiquette: Make it part of your syllabus. *MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 6(1), 264-267.

Netiquette: A Lesson Plan for Students (with Discussion Topics and Activities). Website Builders.com.

<https://websitebuilders.com/how-to/lesson-plans/netiquette/>

Online Education Best Practices from The University of Texas at Tyler. <http://www.uttyler.edu/online/files/netiquette.pdf>

Video Conferencing Guidelines (2020)

<https://www.oct.ca/resources/advisories/video-conferencing-guidelines>

Maintaining Professionalism: Use of Electronic Communication and Social Media (Updated 2017)

<https://www.oct.ca/resources/advisories/use-of-electronic-communication-and-social-media>

Safety in Learning Environments: A Shared Responsibility (2013)

<https://www.oct.ca/resources/advisories/safety>