

**Policies for Student Teaching in Music  
Brandon University**

**Department of Music Education**

**Brandon University**

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## **Policies for Student Teaching in Music**

### **Brandon University**

This policy handbook is written and distributed to those who are engaged in Brandon University student teaching or field experience placements in music. It is intended primarily as a guide for students, but will also be made available to cooperating teachers. It is supplementary to the “Field Experience in Music: Guidelines & Evaluation” developed by the Joint Department of Music Education, and to the “Field Experience Handbook” of the Faculty of Education. What follows is intended to give students an orientation to expectations they will face in their professional program. Before student teaching, however, students must acquaint themselves with the content of all three of these documents.

Field experience is one of the most important activities for students preparing to become teachers. It is crucial in the formation of professional commitment and responsibility, and in helping prospective music educators to transform their academic and musical preparation into professional practice. The student teaching experience offers indispensable opportunities for guided practical experience, for critical reflection, and assessment of the prospective teacher’s strengths and weaknesses. Cooperating schools and especially the cooperating teachers provide invaluable services for the university, for student teachers, and for the teaching profession. University supervisors play an indispensable formative role in helping student teachers reflect carefully on instructional practice in ways that enable them to realize their fullest potential as music educators and professional leaders.

It is crucial that all music education students understand all policies and follow all procedures outlined here.

#### **Placement Procedures**

The Department works closely with the Field Experience Office, professional leaders, and area School Divisions to secure for you an appropriate placement with a highly qualified cooperating teacher, and in a setting consistent with Departmental philosophy and your program’s knowledge base.

Sites for placements are selected to meet program objectives and to maximize the efficient use of university resources. You will not be placed in schools you have attended as a student, where any of your immediate family members work or are students, where you have engaged in instructional support activity, where you completed previous practicum experiences, or with a cooperating teacher with whom you have worked in the past. Student teaching placements in music are also made in light of geographical considerations and feasibility of regular supervisory visits. Student teachers in music can expect to be placed at least once in a larger urban setting and once in a more rural community. Non-local placement sites may be assigned in accordance with program and/or identified student needs. Student teachers will also be expected to complete placements in early years, middle years, and senior years settings, as appropriate to the student’s emphasis. All placements are based on availability and efficiency of appropriate supervision, and are made with close attention to the match between individual student skills and needs and the potential benefits of practicing in a given setting.

Placements are arranged well in advance (often by as much as 12 months) of the date a particular field experience is scheduled to commence. Students may request, in writing, placement in a specific community or school, provided the request is received by the Chair of Music Education before placements have been arranged. Submission of such a request is no

guarantee it will be met, since there are numerous factors to be weighed in any given placement. Requests must outline in detail for the Department's consideration the reasons for the request. Reasons must bear directly on perceived professional benefits for the student. Inconvenience or financial challenges to the student are not among the reasons that can be accommodated. Out-of-province student teaching/internship placements are generally not an option, nor are placements in locations not supportive of regular supervisory visits. **Under no circumstances may students initiate contact with school division personnel directly.**

Please bear in mind that School districts and schools provide prospective sites for student teaching assignments voluntarily, as a professional courtesy, and that service as a cooperating teacher is a voluntary professional activity. This means that one further concern in arranging placements is the recency and frequency with which student teachers have been placed with a particular teacher or in a given setting. Working with student teachers adds significantly to the cooperating teacher's work-related responsibilities.

Cooperating teachers or other officials may require interviewing students before agreeing to accept them for a placement. As part of the interview, students may be asked to present a resume, a portfolio, or other documents. Students should inquire what will be required at the interview in advance.

### **Changes in Placements**

Changes in placements typically will not be made once positions within a specific school division have been requested and/or confirmed. Because many factors are involved in making student teaching/internship assignments, however, a particular placement occasionally may be inappropriate for professional reasons. If you receive notification of an assignment for which you believe you are not qualified, or which you believe is not suited to your anticipated area of specialization, notify the Chair of Music Education immediately. **Do not contact the school, the cooperating teacher, or the Field Experience Office. Music placements are made by the Music Education Department.**

In *very rare* instances you may learn that a placement appears inappropriate *after* you have made contact with your cooperating teacher –e.g., the cooperating teacher's schedule will not allow sufficient time for you to assume full responsibility for classroom instruction. In this situation, notify your university supervisor immediately. He or she will work with you and your cooperating teacher to address perceived problems or to arrange a more appropriate experience.

The Department strives at all times to apply appropriate criteria evenly, fairly and in keeping with the best interests of the student and the University. If a student feels an improper decision has been made in regard to an important aspect of her/his placement, supervision, or evaluation, a written appeal may be directed to the Department of Music Education through its Chair. Appeals must be specific and supported by relevant documentation. If the situation is not resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, the appeal will be adjudicated by a panel designated by the Director of Field Experience. This panel's decision is final and binding.

### **Housing and Transportation**

Housing arrangements are the responsibility of the student teacher. Music Education students must anticipate and plan for several off-campus or out-of-town placements during their program. Where a placement requires that you live off-campus, you may wish to contact your cooperating and/or school principal well in advance. The cooperating teacher or principal may have contacts in the community that may provide housing at nominal cost to the student teacher. The cost for such accommodations is to be negotiated between the student teacher and the party providing housing.

Transportation to and from student teaching sites is the responsibility of the student teacher. In some instances, car pooling may be an option you may wish to pursue. Students who commute from home or from the campus to placement sites are responsible for arranging transportation to ensure prompt arrival and uninterrupted attendance.

### **The Initial School Visit**

It is important for you to become acquainted with your host school and cooperating teacher soon after your placement assignment is made. Both you and your cooperating teacher will have many questions that can be answered during that first visit.

*Please contact the principal and your cooperating teacher to make arrangements for this visit; do not arrive without notice.* Most principals and teachers prefer that you save time by calling, rather than writing a letter, to set up the meeting date and time. Be sure to allow enough time for your visit; if school is in session, you will want to visit the classroom as well as have time to get acquainted with your cooperating teacher.

You should prepare for this visit by writing down a list of questions and items you would like to discuss with your cooperating teacher. Some topics you may wish to consider are:

- school philosophy, school policies, school calendar, and daily schedule;
- required reports and record-keeping, building floor plan, grading standards, and discipline procedures (ask for a copy of the school handbook if one is available);
- the curriculum and specific skills to be covered during your placement;
- the instructional materials and strategies that your cooperating teacher uses;
- school expectations for students and information about your pupils and their classroom routines (ask if your school has a student handbook);
- information about the community in which your school is located; and
- school expectations for you in terms of dress, behaviour, etc.

You should also remember that this first visit is an opportunity for your cooperating teacher to learn about you. Be prepared to discuss your experiences, skills, special interests, and expectations for your student teaching/internship experience.

Make the most of this valuable opportunity to get to know your school, its staff, and its students. A positive first visit will help the staff to welcome you and will set the stage for a positive student teaching experience.

### **Attendance, Employment, Extracurricular/Conflicting Activities**

Regardless of the format of your student teaching experience, you must follow the school division, not the university, calendar -- including vacations, holidays, and workdays. If the weather is inclement, be sure to listen to your local radio or television station for "no school" announcements. You must attend any school "make-up" days that are scheduled during the time of your placement

You are expected to follow your cooperating teacher's school-related schedule throughout your placement, observing the same hours and attending professional meetings such as faculty meetings, parent conferences (at the discretion of the cooperating teacher), PTA, and in-service workshops. You are also expected to take an active part in extra-curricular activities as appropriate.

When approached as it should be, student teaching is unusually demanding in terms of time and energy. **It is considered to be a full-time experience that takes precedence over all other responsibilities.** Therefore, you may not enrol in additional course work without securing prior written Departmental approval. Such requests will be granted only in exceptional circumstances. In addition, you must limit outside employment or participation in extra-curricular activities (*including other ongoing musical or instructional commitments*) during your placement. You will be asked to drop any activities that interfere with your student teaching. **In no case may outside responsibilities be scheduled during the hours required for student teaching.**

There is **no** provision for absence during your student teaching or internship except for documented personal illness, death in your immediate family, or other extreme circumstances.

In case of unexpected absence (illness, car trouble, etc.), you must notify your cooperating teacher immediately. Call your teacher at home or at school as soon as a problem arises. If you cannot reach your teacher, contact your school principal. **Keep calling until your teacher or principal has been notified.** At that time you should also inform your university supervisor of any situation requiring an absence. If your cooperating teacher and university supervisor determine that, for whatever reason, you have had an excessive number of absences, your placement may be extended to ensure that you meet the program's requirements.

### **Professionalism**

Student teaching is a significant step toward becoming a professional educator. You are, therefore, expected to demonstrate the attitudes and actions of a professional educator. These include: conforming to your host school's rules and policies; extending basic rules of courtesy to teachers, pupils, school staff, and the broader school community; meeting the standards of dress, personal appearance, and professional behaviour expected of the staff at your host school; and placing school responsibilities ahead of personal wishes.

During your student teaching you may have access to confidential records and other highly personal information. You must safeguard such knowledge and use it for professional purposes only. ***Please exercise professional judgment about when, where, and with whom to discuss any aspect of your student teaching experience.*** Share any specific concerns about confidentiality with your cooperating teacher or your university supervisor.

Read and be certain you understand fully the code of professional practice of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, of which you are a member.

***YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL. EVERY ASPECT OF YOUR BEHAVIOR SHOULD REFLECT THIS.***

### **Your Cooperating Teacher**

Your cooperating teacher will facilitate your growth as a music educator in many ways, including

#### ***Teaching:***

- reviewing and providing feedback on your lesson/rehearsal plans prior to their being delivered;
- observing you informally and providing oral feedback on both classroom management skills and at least one lesson or activity each day;
- serving as a resource for you regarding supplies, equipment, curriculum responsibilities, and the teaching process;

- working cooperatively with your university supervisor to see that you meet program goals and expectations;
- working cooperatively with your university supervisor to monitor your readiness to assume increased classroom teaching responsibilities, and providing those additional opportunities as appropriate; and
- providing increasing feedback and support as you assume full responsibility for classroom instruction or rehearsals.

**Reflection:**

- keeping you continually apprised of your progress and revising your goals and expectations as necessary;
- keeping your university supervisor and principal informed of your progress on a regular basis;
- completing your written weekly and final evaluations in cooperation with your university supervisor; and
- providing you with opportunities for professional growth by encouraging observations of other educators, attendance at professional meetings, and participation in the entire school's programs.

Your cooperating teacher will share teaching activities with you in a variety of ways, and eventually may leave you alone in the classroom for extended periods of time. It is expected that these brief periodic absences will cause minimal disruption to the class, while helping you make the transition to full-time teaching responsibilities. Remember, though, that "soloing" does not imply that your cooperating teacher will leave you alone all day; observations and feedback on your teaching skills are even more critical as you assume a greater teaching role. *It is the total responsibility for teaching each day that is important, not just being alone in the classroom.*

**The Principal**

The principal has ultimate responsibility for the school in which you are placed. Because of this, it is important that s/he be kept apprised of your student teaching activities and progress. ***Note as well that you and your cooperating teacher have an obligation to keep the principal informed about unusual classroom events or potentially harmful or dangerous situations such as suspected child abuse or students in distress.***

Some ways in which the principal might assist you and your cooperating teacher include:

- helping to introduce you to school faculty and staff;
- helping to interpret the student teaching program to the broader community;
- ensuring that you have the space and supplies needed during your student teaching/internship experience; and
- providing time for you and your cooperating teacher to have conferences.

In addition, your principal plays an important role in observing and evaluating your progress as a student teacher. It is desirable that your principal or vice-principal make at least one formal observation of your teaching if possible. It is your responsibility to arrange this observation with your principal.

### **Your University Supervisor (Supervising Teacher)**

Your university supervisor is the primary liaison between the university and your cooperating school. S/he will facilitate your transition from university student to student teacher, and will be of help in the following areas.

- interpreting the program and student teaching expectations to your cooperating teacher and principal;
- defining her/his specific expectations and requirements for your placement;
- participating with you and your cooperating teacher in planning your individual program and schedule;
- discussing the lesson and unit plan formats suggested or required by your program
- providing appropriate professional literature and other instructional resources when needed;
- visiting, observing, and holding individual and joint conferences with you, your cooperating teacher, and your building principal;
- helping you to interpret your plans and experiences based on the theory, research, knowledge, and best practices taught in your program;
- encouraging your personal and professional growth as a developing teacher;
- developing your ability to reflect upon and make adjustments to your teaching practice;
- arranging for other resources to help with specific instructional problems;
- working with you, the Department, or the Field Experience Office if special concerns arise;
- providing ongoing and final evaluations of your teaching progress;
- determining final course credit.

The number and length of visits and observations by your supervisor will vary according to the supervisor's schedule and your specific needs, but you should expect an average of at least one visit every two weeks. During these visits your supervisor will:

- review your lesson/rehearsal plans;
- observe one or more classes or activities while you are teaching; and
- confer with you and your cooperating teacher, or schedule another time to do so.

During her/his final visit, your supervisor will meet with you and your cooperating teacher to discuss the final evaluation of your progress.

Your university supervisor will keep in close contact with you between visits and will provide you with directions for contacting him/her in case of emergencies.

### **Lesson/Rehearsal Planning**

Your success as a student teacher depends in large part upon how well you have planned.

Student teachers are expected to base instruction on lesson/rehearsal and unit plans prepared in advance. Each lesson plan should include well-written objectives, and make specific provision for the evaluation of results – the extent to which objectives are met, and communication of this assessment.

Initial lesson/rehearsal plans should be written out in considerable detail in order to assist in thinking through the teaching process. A rough "task analysis" is helpful at first, listing all the steps in the lesson and connecting them to the eventual objective before writing them in final form. Procedures should include an anticipatory set, steps in guiding and learning, independent practice, conclusion, and evaluation of learning.

The student teacher may use the planning model used by the cooperating teacher.

Initially, all lesson/rehearsal plans should be written and approved by the cooperating teacher in advance, who may write comments and suggestions on them. After the lesson has been taught, these written plans should then be filed and made available to the university supervisor for additional critiquing. It is a good idea to make a photocopy of each lesson/rehearsal plan for your portfolio or your own records. You should write comments on it concerning strengths and weaknesses, timing, overall presentation, level of preparedness and any unexpected things that happened that may be considered in future planning – in short, what you learned from delivery of this particular lesson.

If late submission of lesson/rehearsal plans or inadequate planning become a recurrent problem, the cooperating teacher should inform the university supervisor. If this problem persists, it will result in termination of the student teaching assignment.

Copies of all lesson plans are to be available for review by the university supervisor at each visit.

### **Grading/Assesment**

Student teaching will be evaluated on the basis of the following general criteria:

- Personal qualities
- Effective planning
- Knowledge of subject material
- Teaching methods and materials
- Musical sensitivity
- Evaluation and follow-up
- Classroom management
- Professionalism in attitude and relationships
- Involvement in school activities

An "Unsatisfactory" grade may be assigned where deficiencies are observed in the above and/or

- Excessive absences (excused or not excused)
- Incomplete written assignments
- Unsatisfactory teaching
- Weak background in curricular areas that seriously affect teaching performance.

Withdrawal - A student may withdraw from student teaching due to change of program or due to extraordinary personal circumstances. Requests will be reviewed on an individual basis.

Incomplete - Lengthy excused absence (illness or extraordinary personal circumstances), unfinished written work or situations in which a brief additional period of student teaching is



necessary to earn "Satisfactory" standing may warrant assignment of an Incomplete. Completion of an Incomplete is subject to provisions stipulated, in writing, by the supervising teacher after Departmental consultation.

Failure - Lack of ability to demonstrate potential to gain competencies previously listed may warrant a failing grade. This designation is usually given after the student has been given the opportunity to repeat portions of the field experience and demonstrate improvement, at the discretion of the cooperating teacher and faculty supervisor.

Your university supervisor will work closely with your cooperating teacher to reach consensus regarding your final evaluation. The supervisor, however, has the final responsibility for determining whether you have satisfactorily met all requirements.

If a cooperating teacher, school administrator, or university supervisor believes that a "Satisfactory" rating is in jeopardy, the student and the Department Chair will be informed of the situation as soon as possible.