

State University of New York at Cortland

## **Fair Process Policy & Procedures for Review of Professional Competencies in Teacher Education**

### **Article I GENERAL PROVISIONS**

#### **Section 1. Scope**

Teacher education programs at SUNY Cortland are located in each of the three schools within the College: the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Professional Studies and the School of Education. The provisions of the Fair Process Policy & Procedures apply to all teacher education programs at SUNY Cortland.

#### **Section 2. Definitions**

**A. Checkpoint:** one of six times during a student's academic program whereby various requirements and/or criteria are assessed to fairly and accurately determine progress toward degree completion.

**B. Professional organization:** a professional body which governs and regulates standards for the profession.

**C. Mail:** letters sent to students under Articles II and III will be sent via overnight registered and certified mail, return receipt requested through the United States Postal Service to both the local and permanent addresses of the student.

**D. Business:** a "business day" is Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday Thursday or Friday on which the College conducts regularly scheduled business.

**E. Address of record:** the student's local and permanent addresses as listed on the Banner System. Students are responsible for maintaining up-to-date addresses on the College computer system, Banner.

**F. Dean:** *Dean of the teacher candidate's School.*

**G. Chairperson;s Designee:** *In the event that an academic chairperson is away from campus for an extended time, they should designate another member or administrator to act on their behalf for any actions under this policy.*

#### **Section 3. Academic and Professional Criteria for Admission, Retention and Graduation**

A. All SUNY Cortland teacher education programs prepare candidates to become competent teachers who make a positive difference in the lives of their students. The Teacher Education Council is the recognized governing body for all teacher education programs at SUNY Cortland.

B. In deciding whether to admit to, retain in or graduate from a program, SUNY Cortland teacher education programs consider the individual's competencies related to serving in the teaching profession, including personal characteristics, conduct, personal responsibility and integrity, and potential to serve effectively and ethically in the teaching profession.

1. General Academic Criteria: In deciding whether to admit to, retain in or graduate from a program, SUNY Cortland considers:

- a. The values set out in the university's mission statement and written student policies. (see Appendix A)

- b. The values set out in the Teacher Education Council's NCATE mission statement, the SUNY Cortland Conceptual Framework for Teacher Education and written policies and procedures for teacher education candidates, as well as professional competencies as defined by each teacher Education program at the College. (*Appendix B to be included when completed by departments/programs*)
- c. Applicants and candidates for state-approved programs; the legal requirements and professional expectations as set out in the applicable laws and regulations governing state certification and program registry.
- d. The standards and rules adopted or recognized by the applicable professional organizations.

2. Specific Academic Criteria: In deciding whether to admit to, retain in or graduate from a program, SUNY Cortland teacher education programs consider:

- a. Whether the individual has submitted a timely and complete application to the program.
- b. Whether the individual meets the admissions criteria set out in the university's catalog(s), and in the written admissions materials for the teacher education program.
- c. Whether the individual has maintained the required cumulative grade point average at each applicable checkpoint.
- d. Whether the individual has received the minimum required grade as set out by the program for each course taken as part of the degree program.
- e. Whether the individual has met all the other program completion requirements for retention and graduation as set forth in the university's catalogs as well as each program's written candidate policies, procedures and professional competencies.

3. Professional Competencies and Criteria: In deciding whether to admit to, retain in or graduate from a program, SUNY Cortland considers:

- a. The individual's ability to communicate and work effectively with others, including those from different backgrounds, those with exceptional needs or limitations, those from different racial or ethnic populations, and those of both genders and different sexual orientation.
- b. The individual's moral character, fitness and dispositions for the teaching profession, including, but not limited to any felony conviction(s) that would bar state certification.
- c. The individual's behavior in light of appropriate professional and ethical standards.
- d. The individual's general and specific knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to successfully complete the particular program and to function effectively in the teaching profession, as set forth in each program's written candidate policies, procedures and professional competencies, as well as the standards and rules adopted or recognized by the appropriate professional organizations.

- 4. When, in the opinion of the department chairperson or designee a student's ability to satisfy the academic and professional criteria listed in this section is in doubt, the department chairperson or designee will complete the Candidate Consultation Report.
- 5. Before completion of the Candidate Consultation Report, the student will receive at least 3 days notice of the consultation meeting and will be informed of the opportunity to bring to the meeting a member of the Cortland faculty to serve as third party witness. The student will be invited to sign the report but is under no obligation to do so. When the report is complete it will be distributed to the student, the faculty attending the meeting, the program coordinator and the student's associate dean. (If the student fails to appear for the meeting, the report will be completed in absentia.)

#### Section 4. **Disclaimer**

Admission to or graduation from a teacher education program at SUNY Cortland does not constitute a guarantee that the candidate will be granted a New York State teaching certificate, extension, endorsement or licence.

#### **Section 5. Academic and Professional Decisions Subject to Review Under This Policy**

An individual who is terminated from a program by a department under Article II of this policy may request a review of such a decision by the Dean of the candidate's School following the procedures set out in Article III of this policy.

#### **Section 6. Academic and Professional Decisions Not Subject to Review Under This Policy**

An individual who is denied entrance to a SUNY Cortland teacher education program cannot request a review of that decision beyond the department/program level. In addition, an individual cannot request a review under this policy of any of the following:

- A. A decision denying a request to have a program or course requirement waived.
- B. An evaluation by a College Field Supervisor during field placements.
- C. A decision that a candidate should be removed from a class.
- D. A decision to withdraw a candidate from, or reassign a candidate to, a field placement or clinical experience.
- E. A determination of eligibility for field experiences.

### **Article II**

#### **Section 7. Grounds for Termination from a Program**

A department may terminate a candidate from a program for failure to meet, satisfy or demonstrate satisfactory performance with respect to one or more of the academic and/or professional criteria in *Article I*, Section 3B.

#### **Section 8. Candidate Withdrawal from a Program**

If at any time a candidate chooses to withdraw from a teacher education program, the candidate should notify the department chairperson, or their designee, by either completing a change of major form or withdrawal from college form.

#### **Section 9. Notification of Proposed Action to Terminate a Candidate from a Program**

A. It is normal practice for a department chairperson or designee to informally consult with a candidate about a proposed decision to terminate that candidate from the program. The department chairperson or designee will refer to the academic and professional criteria listed above and the student's record as reflected in the Candidate Consultation Report(s) and transcript. At this point, the candidate may choose to withdraw from the program (see Section 8) and the matter will then be considered concluded.

B. If a candidate chooses to continue in the program after informal notification, but before the department finalizes a decision to terminate a candidate, the department chairperson or designee will mail the candidate a letter:

- 1. Notifying the candidate of the proposed action, including the effective date of that action.

2. Identifying the reasons for the proposed action.
3. Providing the candidate ten business days after the postmark date to make a written request to meet with the department chairperson or their designee, to discuss the decision.

#### Section 10. Department-Level Review Meeting

A. If the candidate does not request a meeting with the department chairperson or designee within the time frame set out in the notification of proposed action, the department chair or designee will mail to the candidate a program termination decision letter (Section 2), which may be appealed through the Office of the Dean of the School (Article III).

B. If the candidate wishes to meet with the department chairperson or designee, the candidate must make a *formal* written request (*no email or faxed communication is permitted*) for such a meeting within ten business days after the notification of proposed action was postmarked. This written request for a meeting should be addressed to the department chairperson or designee and shall provide all the information and explanations the candidate wants the department chairperson or designee to take into consideration in making the decision. This written request for a meeting must be signed and dated, and contain all the following information:

1. A statement identifying the program decision that is being requested for review.
2. A statement explaining why the candidate believes that the program decision should be changed.
3. Any information and relevant documentation that the candidate has to support his or her belief that the decision should be changed.
4. The candidates's current address of record, telephone number and e-mail address.
5. A signed statement giving the department chairperson or designee permission to talk to person(s) who may have relevant documentation and information. If the candidate refuses to sign such a release, the review process is thereby concluded and the program decision stands.

C. Within ten business days of receiving a written request from the candidate, the department chairperson will schedule a meeting among the candidate, the department chairperson or designee and the academic advisor. Whenever possible, the meeting should be held within ten business days of the date the candidate's request for review was received by the department chairperson.

1. This meeting will be conducted by the department chairperson or designee. The candidate should be given the opportunity to provide participants with information and/or documentation relevant to the candidates's performance and clarifying questions may be asked.
2. Since all SUNY Cortland teacher education programs are professional programs, candidates are expected to be personally present at the meeting, to speak on their own behalf, and to appropriately participate in the process of the meeting. If the candidate elects to do so, the candidate may be accompanied by a faculty or professional staff member of their choice, who may observe but not actively participate in the meeting, except at the department chairperson's sole discretion. The candidate may elect to provide such faculty or professional staff member with previous correspondence related to this appeal. The department chair's office will not be responsible for providing the faculty or professional staff member with information. At least one day prior to the review meeting, the candidate shall inform the department chairperson of the name of the support person, if any.
3. The duration of this meeting is at the sole discretion of the department chairperson or designee.

#### Section 11. Program Decision Letter

A. Whether or not the candidate chooses to meet with the department chairperson or designee as described in

Section 10, the department chairperson will finalize the departmental decision. The department chairperson or designee will then mail to the candidate a program decision letter notifying the candidate of the outcome. If the decision is to terminate the candidate from the program, the program termination decision letter will notify the candidate of the opportunity to have the department's decision reviewed through the Office of the Dean of the School (Article III).

B. Once the department chairperson or designee has mailed to the candidate a program termination decision letter, the candidate will not be permitted to attend or register for classes in that major. If a candidate requests entry into a new teacher education major, this request will be subject to joint review by both department chairpersons or designees.

### **Article III**

#### **Section 12. Standard for Appealing a Program Termination Decision**

A department's decision to terminate a candidate from a program, as specified in *Article II, Section 7* will be overturned only if the Dean of the School determines that the department's decision was based upon an unfair process. The Dean will not reverse a department's decision simply because the Dean might have reached a different decision given the performance of the candidate.

#### **Section 13. Candidate Request for Appeal Meeting**

A. A candidate who wishes to appeal a department decision to terminate the candidate from a program must submit a *formal* written request for an appeal meeting (*no email or faxed communication is permitted*) within ten business days after the program termination letter was postmarked, to the Office of the Dean of the School. If the candidate does not deliver this request within these time limits, the candidate waives his or her right to an appeal and the program termination decision stands.

B. The request for an appeal meeting must be in writing and must contain the following information:

1. A statement identifying the program decision that is being appealed.
2. Any evidence that demonstrates the decision to terminate was arbitrary and capricious and should be changed.
3. The candidate's current address of record, telephone number and e-mail address.
4. A signed statement giving the Dean or Dean's designee permission to talk to person(s) who may have relevant information. If the candidate refuses to sign such a release, the appeal process is thereby concluded and the program termination decision stands.

#### **Section 14. Appeal Procedure for Candidates**

A. The office of the Dean of the School will schedule an appeal meeting between the candidate and the Teacher Education Board of Appeals. The Teacher Education Board of Appeals consists of the Associate Dean of the candidate's School, department chair, as well as faculty representatives from the Teacher Education Council, including at least one representative from another School with in the College. If the candidate is a graduate student, then an additional member from the Graduate Studies Office will be included. The Dean's Office will notify the candidate and the Board of Appeals of the date, time and place of the appeal meeting. Whenever possible, the appeal meeting should be held within ten business days of the date the candidate's request for review was received in the Dean's Office.

B. If, without good cause as determined by the Board, the candidate fails to appear for the appeal meeting, the candidate shall be deemed to have abandoned his or her appeal and the original program decision shall stand.

C. Candidates are expected to be personally present at the appeal meeting, to speak on their own behalf and to participate in the process of the appeal meeting. If the candidate elects to do so, the candidate may be accompanied by a faculty or professional staff member of their choice, who may observe, but not actively participate in the appeal meeting, except at the Board's sole discretion. The candidate may elect to provide such faculty or professional staff member with previous correspondence related to this appeal. The Dean's Office will not be responsible for providing the faculty or professional staff member with information. At least one day prior to the appeal meeting, the candidate shall inform the Dean's Office of the name of the support person, if any.

D. As a general rule, the following process will be followed at the appeal meeting:

1. A recording or verbatim record of the meeting is permitted. However, no recording or verbatim record of the Board deliberations will be made.
2. The Associate Dean of the candidate's School will be the facilitator of the meeting.
3. The Associate Dean will provide the candidate with an opportunity to explain the candidate's reasons for requesting that the program's decision be changed. The members of the Board of Appeals may then ask questions of the candidate. The Associate Dean may conclude the meeting at any time after the candidate has been heard by the Board.
4. The duration of this meeting is at the sole discretion of the Associate Dean.

E. After the conclusion of the appeal meeting, the Board will deliberate the request for review. After deliberation, the Associate Dean will forward the Board's recommendation to the Dean of the School, who will forward the Board's decision to the candidate.

F. Upon review of relevant documents and the recommendation of the Teacher Education Board of Appeals, the Dean of the School may take any of the following actions:

1. Affirm the original decision to terminate the candidate from the program.
2. Reverse the original decision to terminate the candidate from the program.
3. Conditionally reverse the original decision to terminate the candidate from the program, subject to the candidate meeting additional requirements.
4. Request additional information before making a final decision.

G. After reaching a decision, the Dean's Office will mail a letter with the decision of the Dean of the School to the candidate, the Dean of the School of Education and the department chairperson within ten business days of the review meeting whenever possible.

H. A candidate may request a meeting with the Dean of the School after receiving the decision letter. The time, place and duration of the meeting will be scheduled by the Dean's Office

I. The decision of the Dean of the School is final and is not subject to further review or appeal.