

Dear Spring 2020 Student Teachers,

In light of the email from President Alger yesterday, I wanted to send you another update. I wish I had some more definitive answers to your many questions related to student teaching, licensure and graduation, but I have shared everything I know as of now below. Please know that JMU is working closely with the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE), the Virginia Board of Education, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

As you know, successful student teaching is a requirement for program completion, graduation, and licensure eligibility. Some student teaching requirements are mandated by Virginia Regulations 8VAC20-543 in terms of length, direct teaching hours, and meeting competencies; some are based on meeting our requirements for approved programs in Virginia; and some are degree and/or program requirements.

As explained in the initial email on March 11th (below), most students have met the requirement in terms of direct teaching hours; however, we were very hopeful that we would get some more face-to-face time... The majority of candidates are short by one week (having met 9 out of a minimum 10 week state requirement) to date. The VDOE has indicated that if we make a request to allow candidates to be licensed without the full 10 weeks, as long as they have come close **and have met all other criteria** to be recommended for licensure according to JMU, the state superintendent is **very likely to approve**. *We are not permitted to submit this request before mid-April*, so while we can't say it is a definite, please try to feel at ease with this good news.

Each teacher education program is in the process of reviewing each of their candidate's eligibility based on professional and dispositional competencies to be recommended for licensure **IF** we had to stop right now. Please know for a small handful of student teachers who: may not have been able to complete 9 weeks to date for a variety of reasons (including started their placement late or having missed a lot of time), are on a plan of improvement/intervention plan, successfully completed one block of student teaching but have not yet met the required competencies to be recommended for licensure, **your program will be in touch on an individual basis in the coming weeks**. Feel free to reach out to your program coordinator if you think this might impact you. They will not have any answers just yet, but it is good to leave the lines of communication open!

Also, be aware that in the coming weeks, your program may be in touch with expectations (video observations, assignments, reflections, etc.) to meet some of the criteria/competencies for the second block of student teaching.

What happens if schools where I'm placed reopen before May 6th?

We are looking into the possibility that IF schools were to reopen, that student teachers could determine (based on their own health and well-being) if they are able to return to the classroom. The decision would be voluntary. It would help to better prepare candidates for the profession, and of course remove any doubt about meeting requirements.

What happens if schools where I am placed offer online/distance education or extension activities?

It is an excellent learning opportunity for candidates and will help to support P-12 learners. Please continue to track involvement with these activities in Tk20. While these hours cannot count towards the direct teaching hours, they definitely will be considered as part of overall field experiences. Fill out

weekly activity logs and reflections. Note: candidates are not required to go into teacher workdays that are happening these weeks while schools are closed, but if you decide to go, please indicate it on Tk20.

Other important information:

1. Please follow the instructions for **Applying for Initial Virginia Teaching License** at <https://www.jmu.edu/coe/esc/files/Applying-Initial-Licensure-1.pdf> as reviewed during the student teaching conference. You can mail in your licensure application at the address on the bottom of the PDF. Be sure to follow the instructions for ordering your transcript as indicated on the PDF.
2. If you still need to pass a licensure assessment (**VCLA, Praxis Subject Assessment, and/or RVE** – see <https://www.jmu.edu/coe/esc/files/Assessments for VA Licensure.pdf>), it is possible that your test center may be closed – Ashby Lab is closed to all ETS testing through May 15. There are some test centers that have not closed, so you should check with ETS or Pearson test centers in your area. **Please be aware** -- you will need these assessments for program completion and licensure. The same goes with First Aid/CPR/AED certification. **You will be allowed to receive your degree without these tests**, in light of our need to be flexible during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, based on current state regulations we cannot consider you a program completer for verification forms or submit your licensure packets until we receive your assessment reports. If anything changes regarding this, we will let you know!
3. Please refer to President Alger’s email sent yesterday (3/18/2020) regarding **spring commencement** ceremonies being postponed. JMU will be back in touch when further information is available.

The bottom line - we are working hard to ensure candidates will be able to receive degrees and be licensed in all cases where it is possible!

As always, if you have any concerns, please continue to feel free to reach out to Dara Hall halldm@jmu.edu or Dean L’Esperance lestperme@jmu.edu.