

EARLY FIELD EXPERIENCE HANDBOOK

**A Guide for Cooperating Teachers and Students
in AG 107 Agricultural Education Orientation
offered by the Agriculture Program at
College of the Sequoias in collaboration with the Agricultural
Education Program at California State University, Fresno**



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Introduction

The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC) Standards of Program Quality and Effectiveness for the Subject Matter Requirement for the Single Subject Matter Programs articulate the requirements of early field experiences:

Standard - Introductory Classroom Experiences

The program provides each prospective teacher with planned, structured observations and experiences in classrooms beginning as early as possible in the subject matter program. Each prospective teacher's introductory classroom experiences are linked to subject matter coursework, and are characterized by diversity and dialogue. The sponsoring institution seeks to collaborate with school districts in selecting schools and classrooms that demonstrate exemplary practice as described in the California Standards for the Teaching Profession. The sponsoring institution also communicates with school districts in making logistical arrangements and in planning teachers' observations and experiences.

Required Elements for: Introductory Classroom Experiences

1. In selected classrooms, introductory experiences include one or more of the following activities: structured observations, supervised instruction or tutoring of students, and other school-based observations and activities that are appropriate for undergraduate students in a subject matter preparation program.
2. Each prospective teacher's field observations and experiences are linked to the content of college or university coursework in the program. In one or more subject matter courses, prospective teachers reflect on, analyze and discuss their observations and experiences in relation to course content.
3. Each prospective teacher's introductory classroom experiences occur, to the greatest extent possible, in classrooms that represent California's diverse student population.
4. Each prospective teacher's experiences include cooperation with at least one carefully-selected certificated classroom teacher.
5. Where feasible and appropriate, the program participates in a broad consortium, including postsecondary institutions as well as school districts, that develops a regional framework for inter-institutional collaboration.

Program Description

This early field experience program is designed to provide students with experience working with teachers and children in secondary agriculture education programs. Program participants have two weekly classroom meetings with their instructor covering various aspects related to

the agriculture teaching profession as well as the responsibilities, duties and requirements of their early field experience, which occur early in the semester.

Students in the program are required to observe at a school site for a minimum of 45 hours during the semester. Of those 45 hours, at least 30 must be spent observing in a secondary agriculture classroom during the regular school day. The remaining 15 hours may be spent observing in another class outside of the agricultural subject matter or observing teachers and students at activities related to the agricultural teaching profession, such as FFA activities, Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) activities, Career Development Events (CDE), or professional development events, such as those provided by the California Agriculture Teachers Association (CATA).

Students are expected to have at least one day each week that they can consistently observe at their assigned school site for a period of time that will allow them to achieve the 45 required observation hours. In consultation with the Cooperating Teaching at the school site, the student should select one or possibly two days per week as well as an appropriate period of time in which they will observe at the school site. Observation of FFA, SAE and CATA activities will need to be scheduled separately as these events may occur outside of the normally scheduled observation session.

The field experience serves as a lab for the AG 107 at College of the Sequoias. This approach provides students the opportunity to relate field experience with information delivered through classroom instruction, student discussion, and online.

Objectives of the AG 107 Course / Early Field Experience Program

Upon successful completion of this course, the student is expected to be able to:

1. Describe the components of agricultural education.
2. Define the responsibilities of secondary agricultural education instructors.
3. Explain the history and purpose of vocational agricultural education.
4. Describe the curriculum areas (pathways) and commonly taught courses.
5. Explain the purpose of the FFA organization and experiential learning in agricultural education.
6. Plan an undergraduate and teacher preparation program of study conducive to their career goals in agricultural education.
7. Develop their personal philosophy of agricultural education.
8. Describe current and new technologies used in agricultural education.
9. Satisfy the early field experience requirement for the Agriculture Single Subject Credential Program at California State University, Fresno.

Role of the Student Participant

The early field experience exposes students to teachers, administrators and pupils in a secondary school setting. Students have opportunities to observe various pedagogical techniques and a variety of other routine school procedures. As an initial field experience, this program is distinct from student teaching. Students enter this program before completing formal course work in education and, in most cases, have no teaching experience. They are not expected to emerge as proficient teachers. Rather, the early field experience is designed to orient them to the agricultural teaching profession and to assist them in assessing his/her strengths and weaknesses as a potential teacher. Students may work with one teacher or several, depending on arrangements within their respective schools. The main role of the student is to observe and assist the Cooperating Teacher(s). Although students are primarily there to observe, they are encouraged to participate in as many activities as possible. An initial activity should be familiarization with school policies and procedures. While completing their observation assignment, students must exhibit a sense of responsibility and professionalism. Contacts are not to be established with the cooperating school's students outside of school activities. In professional classes or electronic portfolio documents, students will not relate observed or alleged classroom incidents with teachers or students in any manner that could result in the identification of specific individuals or schools. The COS staff will make every possible effort to establish and maintain the highest possible level of professional behavior by observation students. Students should at all times remember that they serve as a vital link in campus-community relations.

Students should not report to assigned schools prior to or later than the established starting date. Once a student has been assigned a cooperating school, they should follow these steps as they begin their early field experience:

Step 1 – Make contact with Cooperating Teacher.

Students must speak with their Cooperating Teacher before their first visit, so they need to be diligent in making contact. Here are some questions students should ask when speaking with their Cooperating Teacher:

1. Where should I park and check in when I arrive? Guests, such as students observing usually must check in at the school administration office each time they visit their school site. Get directions and have Cooperating Teachers phone number should it be needed.
2. Ask about school bell schedule and discuss when it would be best time period to observe. Tell Cooperating teacher your availability so they can help select the best day and time period for observation. Determine a consistent schedule for the semester (try to visit the same day and time all semester).

3. What is appropriate dress for their teachers? Please dress professionally and appropriately given the school dress code. Absolutely no shorts, no flip flops, strappy shirts, etc.

Step 2 – Things to do before making first visit.

Once the student has confirmed the day and time with the Cooperating Teacher, they are cleared to make your visits. Here are some things to do when visiting your school site.

1. Have directions to your school site and where to check in?
2. Arrive early so as to not disrupt classes and teachers.
3. Check in with Administration office or Ag Department depending on what you are instructed to do.
4. Always act in a courteous and professional manner. Realize that you may not be much older than some of the students in the class; however you should take on the role of a “teacher”. Be aware of the impression you make and remember you represent the College of the Sequoias program. Make us proud!!!

Step 3 – Things to do during observations.

During visitations, students should pay close attention to what the Cooperating Teacher and students are doing. Do not sit in the back of the room and zone out! No homework, no cell phones, computers or other distractions. Here is what you need to be looking for:

1. What are the objectives of the lesson?
2. What teaching methods are being used? How effective are the methods?
3. How did the teacher introduce the topic and did it get the students’ interest?
4. How does the teacher maintain students’ interest in the lesson?
5. How does the teacher manage student behavior?
6. Does the instructor ask questions? What level of thought did they require?
7. How did the instructor evaluate student learning?
8. How could the lesson or presentation been improved?
9. What did you learn from the observation?

Step 4 – Things to do after observations.

After the observation, students should complete the required assignments for the course.

1. Reflect on your experience and write a 1-2 paragraph statement describing what you observed and learned.
2. Complete assignments 1 through 10 from the syllabus
3. After completing your 45 hours of observation time, ask your Cooperating Teacher to assist you in acquiring a letter from a school administrator verifying you completed your observation time at their school site.

4. Write your Cooperating Teacher(s) a thank you note at the completion of your time at their school. They have volunteered to host you as a courtesy to our profession, please make them feel appreciated for giving their time.

Student Absences

Each student will report to the cooperating school every agreed upon day of the semester. It is essential that students understand the seriousness of unexcused absences. If a student cannot appear for scheduled observation session, the following explains his/her responsibilities:

1. Call the school site, specifically the Cooperating Teacher, prior to the time you are expected to arrive and notify him/her of your absence.
2. With the approval of your Cooperating Teacher arrange an alternate day or extended time for making up the observation time.

Throughout the early field experience program, students must maintain a log of their experiences. The logs include a discussion of activities in which they participate, classroom observations, and their reflections on these observations. Log entries will not include names of any student or teacher (aliases or pseudonyms should be created). They will be turned in as specified by the AG 107 course instructor. The main purpose of the logs is to provide the students with an opportunity to reflect on their experiences.

Student Activities

Some of the activities considered appropriate for student participation are listed below. Others may be added with the mutual consent of the course instructor and Cooperating Teacher. Schools may place limitations on any specific listed activity, although a variety of activities is recommended.

1. Observation Activities
 - Observing cooperating teacher's class
 - Attending a faculty meeting
 - Observing exemplary teachers in other subject matter areas in the same school
 - Observation of FFA, CDE and SAE related activities
2. Planning Activities
 - Assisting teacher in developing and organizing lessons and materials
 - Assisting in grading of student work
 - Assisting with planning of FFA, CDE and SAE related activities

3. Teaching Activities

- Make a short presentation with supervision and cooperation of cooperating teacher to an individual, small group or possibly entire class
- Providing tutoring assistance to student with supervision of cooperating teacher
- Assisting teaching in the presenting lesson information or demonstrations (Please note: Observation students are to be supervised in the classroom by the Cooperating Teacher at all times. Students are not permitted to observe or work with students without a certified teacher being present.)

4. Supervisory Activities

- Assisting pupils with their work
- Assisting a small group of students with an assignment
- Supervising with the teacher in classroom, cafeteria, gym, library, etc.
- Assisting students with information on missed assignments and make-up work
- Assisting with laboratory activities

5. Clerical Activities

- Grading tests, paper, worksheets, etc.
- Operating copying equipment
- Preparing bulletin boards
- Preparing, distributing and maintaining classroom materials and equipment
- Preparation and set up for demonstrations or laboratory activities

Role of the Cooperating Teacher

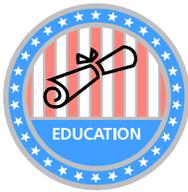
Cooperating teachers are selected by the course instructor on the basis of their professional competency and interest in having an early field experience student. Through the Cooperating Teachers guidance, students are exposed to a variety of teaching activities and daily routines in order to provide an introduction to the teaching profession.

A cooperative working relationship between students and cooperating teachers is vital to the success of the program. Discussions and conferences should be scheduled frequently to plan for future activities, assess the professional growth of the student in the field experience, and identify and resolve problems.

There are many aspects to the role of Cooperating Teacher. Some are listed below:

1. Familiarizing the student with school policies and procedures
2. Helping the student develop a realistic view of adolescents
3. Sharing information that might assist in helping students
4. Exposing the student to a wide range of school experiences
5. Assisting the student in evaluating his/her strengths and weaknesses as a potential teacher

Thus, cooperating teachers provide support and the setting for the students' initial exposure to the agricultural teaching profession. Additionally, at the conclusion of the early field experience students will need your assistance in acquiring a letter from any school site administrator documenting their 45 observation hours. This letter must be printed on the cooperating school's letter head, please see the following example.



Sample High School District

1234 W. Main Street Sometown, CA (559)123-4567
Samplehighschool.k12.ca.gov

Date

To whom it may concern:

This letter is to verify that (Student Full Name) has observed in our agricultural classes at (School Name) during the (fall/spring) semester (year). To date, (Student first name) has completed a total of 45 observation hours during our regular school day within classes related to (his/her) desired credential subject area.

Respectfully,

(Administrator Signature)

(Administrator Name)

(Administrator Title)

(School Name)

Role of the Course Instructor

The course instructor acts as a liaison between school site and the College of the Sequoias. Clarification of program procedures, expectations, and goals is provided by the course instructor. They are responsible for assuring that cooperating teachers, school administrators, and the participating students all have a clear understanding of the program. Doing so includes but is not limited to distributing course information and expectations to all program participants at the onset of the semester.

The course instructor is responsible for the supervision of observation students and should work closely with cooperating teachers and principals to establish and maintain clear lines of communication. Anticipation and identification of problems is an ongoing process. Program problems should be discussed with all involved parties. Appropriate and timely counseling will enhance the success of the student and prevent problems.

Evaluation Procedures

Students are evaluated on a letter grade basis. Students are provided with a syllabus, which describes all of the required course assignments. Please see the course syllabus for information regarding the grading criteria. The following is a list of the assignments in the early field experience program, which includes those required by the CCTC.

1. Most Memorable Teacher - Compose a 1-2 page paper discussing a memorable teacher that may have influenced you to consider teaching. What are the qualities and attributes that you admired?
2. Personal Strengths - Compose a 1-2 page paper in which you identify five areas of personal strength that will help you become an effective teacher. Describe three to five areas that need attention and/or improvement.
3. Why Do You Want To Teach? - People enter the teaching profession for many reasons: honorable work, enjoy working with children, salary and benefits, work schedule, job stability, good working conditions, doing something that makes a difference, etc. Compose a 1-2 page paper discussing why you want to teach?
4. Student Assessment - Compose a 1-2 page paper describing the kinds of assessment observed at the school site and how the information is used?
5. Classroom Management - Compose a 1-2 page paper describing the management system in place in the classroom. Was it effective? Did the students know the rules?
6. Teacher Observation - Observe an Agriculture Teacher's lesson(s) and then compose a 1-2 page paper covering the following topics:
 - o Can you identify the lesson objectives?
 - o Did students understand the material?

7. Instructional Resources - Compose a 1-2 page paper describing the instructional resources (including technology) used by the teacher in the classroom?
8. Student Populations - Compose a 1-2 page paper describing the students in the observed classroom, including culturally and linguistically diverse students, students with disabilities, GATE students, and students with other special needs. How does the observed teacher meet the needs of all students?
9. Addressing Content Standards - After reflecting on the lessons you observed, compose a 1-2 page paper describing how the California content standards are addressed at your school site. What was the content of the lessons you observed? What academic and agriculture standards are being addressed? Provide at least five examples/standards.
10. Interview an Agriculture Teacher - Compose a 2-3 page paper summarizing an interview with an Agriculture Teacher. Consider asking the following questions for the interview and paper:
 - What is the best part of teaching?
 - What has been your greatest achievement as a teacher?
 - What have been your greatest disappointments as a teacher?
 - What are the greatest challenges for teachers?
 - What are your non-teaching duties and time requirements?
 - In what ways are schools successful?
 - What advice do you have for someone considering a career in agriculture teaching?
11. Philosophy of Agricultural Education - Compose a 2-3 page paper describing your thoughts and beliefs about effective education and specifically your beliefs about agriculture education.
12. Observation Log & Reflective Journal
 - Record the date and time of your observations
 - A minimum of 45 observation hours are required
 - Compose an entry in your reflective journal for each observation
 - A minimum of 12 reflective journal entries are required