

Lakehead University Faculty of Education

ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROCEDURES

The Ontario Association of Deans of Education (OADE) recognizes four entry-to-practice categories of skills as capturing the components necessary for teaching practice:

1. Communication skills
2. Intra- and inter-personal skills
3. Cognitive and metacognitive skills
4. Supervision skills

These categories represent reasonable and justifiable skill requirements for coursework and practice teaching. By registering in a Lakehead University Faculty of Education degree program, a student acknowledges having reviewed the Faculty's Essential Skills document, and accepts responsibility for meeting the essential skills required for successful completion of the degree program.

The Faculty of Education adopted the Essential Skills document in May 2016 for implementation in September 2018 (pending Faculty Council approval). The document is posted on the Undergraduate Studies in Education website and as a hyperlink in all course outlines and in offers of admission.

What are Essential Skills?

Essential skills are the fundamental prerequisite skills for coursework and the practice of teaching. These are skills that students are expected to bring into the program, and are deemed foundational for learning professional skills and disciplinary knowledge within the Education program. Knowledge acquired throughout the Bachelor of Education Program builds on these skills to better equip graduates to transition to the teaching profession or to other employment markets.

Responsibilities of Students

- Review the Essential Skills document.
- Make oneself available to receive feedback designed to support competency in the essential skills.
- Attend to feedback immediately.
- Take ownership for improving skills as needed.
- Seek support for developing skills from available services and resources.
- Reach out to Student Accessibility Services if functional limitations affect demonstration of the essential skills.
- In the event of one's failure to meet any of the essential skills, follow the procedures established for the imposition of probation and program withdrawal.

Responsibilities of Instructors

- Review the Essential Skills document.
- Identify and share with students, examples of essentials skills required for your course.
- Model and make explicit the essential skills required for your course, and that students will be expected to demonstrate during placement.
- Guide students to the various resources available to develop their essential skill(s) including referral to Student Accessibility Services.
- Follow the procedures established for the imposition of probation and program withdrawal in the event of student failure to meet any of the essential skills.

Resources and Services for Students

The following list provides information and links to resources available to support student success with the essential skills.

Faculty of Education Resources

Math Skills Workshop: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/education/pd>

Enhancing the Practicum Workshop:
<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/academics/departments/education/pd>

Basics of Academic Writing for Education Students: www.mycounselink.lakeheadu.ca > self-register > “Basics of Academic Writing for Education”

University Resources

Skills for Success Seminars: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-success-centre/skills-for-success-seminars/thunder-bay>

Academic Support Zone: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-success-centre/academic-support-zone>

Aboriginal Cultural & Support Services:
<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/tb/aboriginal-services/individual-services>

Student Accessibility Services:
<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/faculty-and-staff/departments/services/sas>

Student Health and Counselling Centre

Thunder Bay campus: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-health-and-counselling-centre>

Orillia campus: <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/current-students/student-services/or/health-and-wellness/services>

External Resources

Howatt, W., A., & Livingston, G. (2018). [*Inch by Inch, Make Life a Cinch: How Mastering micro skills can change your perspective, your health and your work.*](#) Globe eBooks.

See Ontario Skills Passport for student and teacher resources:
<http://www.skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSP2Web/EDU/Welcome.xhtml>

<http://www.skills.edu.gov.on.ca/OSP2Web/EDU/DisplayNocDetails.xhtml?nocid=4142>

Ontario Human Rights Commission
<http://www.ohrc.on.ca/>

Failure to Meet the Essential Skills

Failure to meet any of the essential skills may result in withdrawal from the Bachelor of Education degree program, following appropriate due process.

A. Procedure for the Imposition of Probation and Program Withdrawal

This procedure is established for the imposition of probation and program withdrawal in the event of student inability to meet any of the essential skills.

Unsatisfactory Performance

Unsatisfactory performance means inability to demonstrate one or more of the essential skills as observed and documented by course instructors, faculty advisors, faculty liaisons, professional experiences coordinator, and/or associate teachers.

As general policy, whenever a faculty member or associate teacher observes student inability to demonstrate an essential skill as outlined in the Essential Skills document, the faculty member or associate teacher shall meet with the student in a timely manner, discuss the circumstances, and communicate the essence of the discussion and steps for improvement in written form to the student, copied to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies/Programs. Associate teachers may choose to work in collaboration with the faculty advisor on matters related to the essential skills. In such cases, the faculty advisor will communicate in written form to the student, copied to the Chair.

Our experience with these types of situations suggests that more positive outcomes arise for everyone involved when:

Faculty:

- determine the way(s) in which the absence of one or more Essential Skill is impacting student progress;
- provide sincere, honest and transparent feedback in a timely and constructive manner;
- focus on what the student can do as the starting point;
- begin with the end in mind – what must be done differently to acquire the essential skill(s); and,
- ask the student what strengths might support Essential Skill development and what strategies might be useful to develop their skill(s), highlight what improvement looks like, and offer suggestions for how to improve; and,
- suggest available resources to facilitate and support Essential Skill development.

Students:

- acknowledge that feedback is an essential element of the learning process; be open and receptive to feedback;

- reframe feedback as a developmental opportunity rather than a personal criticism
- practice active listening
- ask for clarification, seek out specifics and suggestions on how to improve;
- evaluate feedback slowly;
- determine, where possible, strengths that might support skill development; and,
- make a firm commitment to take thoughtful and disciplined action on the feedback; begin with: what is one thing you can do better?

At the discretion of the Chair, when instances of failure to meet one or more of the essential skills have been documented, the Chair shall meet with the student to discuss their performance and co-develop next steps to support student agency in attaining the essential skill(s). A copy of the plan and supporting documentation will be placed in the student's academic file.

Possible outcomes resulting from the co-developed plan:

- Student addresses the deficiency(ies) and continues in the program
- Student fails to address the deficiency(ies), is incapable of demonstrating the essential skills(s), and a formal review is initiated (see B. Faculty of Education Formal Essential Skills Review Protocol).

B. Faculty of Education Formal Essential Skills Review Protocol

Hereinafter called the "Protocol"

- 1) If the Chair of Undergraduate Studies/Education Programs (the "Chair"), upon review of the file of a student ("Student") registered in one of the Faculty of Education's ("Faculty") programs under the Chair's jurisdiction, finds documentary evidence that
 - a) The Student has failed to meet one or more of the Faculty's Essential Skills requirements and has been so advised in writing;
 - b) The Student has been given adequate opportunity or required accommodations to acquire the Essential Skill(s); and,
 - c) The Student continues nevertheless to fail to meet the Essential Skill(s) in question;

then, and only if all three conditions exist, the Chair may file in writing a *Notice of Failure to Meet Essential Skills Requirements* ("Notice") with the Dean of the Faculty of Education (the "Dean").

- 2) The Notice should
 - a) State the Chair's conclusion ("Conclusion") that the Student is continuing to fail to meet particular Essential Skill(s) requirements;
 - b) Include the documentary evidence addressing the three conditions noted in 1) above;
 - c) Propose action ("Proposal") to be taken by the Faculty in response; and

- d) Identify any individuals whom the Dean may consult in reviewing the Conclusion and Proposal.
- 3) Upon receipt of the Notice the Dean shall review the Notice to ensure that it is complete and satisfactory under the circumstances. Within 3 working days of receiving the Notice the Dean shall either
 - a) Return the Notice to the Chair and advise either that it is defective, and describe how it is defective, or that, in view of the circumstances, it is not recommended to proceed with the Proposal at this time; OR
 - b) Notify both the Chair and the Student that the Notice is formally valid and
 - i) Submit the Notice and all supporting documentation to the Student; and
 - ii) Inform the Student, that unless the Student submits to the Dean a valid and complete *Request for Formal Review of Essential Skills Notice* ("Request"), found in Appendix [A] to this Protocol, within 10 working days of receiving the Notice, the Chair's Proposal will be executed.
 - 4) The Request must include
 - a) The Student's declaration that they disagree with either the Conclusion or the Proposal;
 - b) Written evidence and argument in support of the Student's declaration (note that simply stating, "I disagree with the Conclusion/Proposal" or equivalent is neither evidence nor argument).
 - i) The Student is entitled to request and receive without charge copies of records in the possession of the University, provided these records relate directly, to the Conclusion and Proposal in the Notice. Should a dispute arise about the identification of such records, the Dean, in their sole discretion, shall resolve it.
 - ii) The Student may also include written testimonials of others in support of their disagreement with the Conclusion or Proposal.
 - c) Identification of any individuals whom the Dean may consult concerning the Student's disagreement with the Conclusion or Proposal.
 - d) A receipt confirming that the fee for the Request has been paid to the Office of Financial Services. The fee is returned to the student should the appeal be successful.
 - 5) Upon return of a Notice found to be defective, the Chair may remove the defect perceived by the Dean and submit an amended Notice to the Dean, or decline to take further action at that time. If the decision is to decline to take further action, the Chair may notify the Student of their failure to demonstrate one or more Essential Skills and may set a deadline for demonstrating the Skill(s). Should the Student fail to

demonstrate the Skill(s) by the deadline, the Chair may file a new Request with the Dean.

- 6) If the Student does not submit a Request within 10 working days of receiving the Notice and its supporting documentation, the Dean shall authorize the Chair to carry out the Proposal. In exceptional circumstances the Dean has the discretion to extend the deadline for filing a Request and to defer authorization for the execution of a Proposal. Once, however, the Dean has given this authorization, no further appeal will be granted.
- 7) Upon receipt of a Request the Dean shall assess it to ensure that it is complete and valid and that the associated fee has been paid. If the assessment is deemed satisfactory, the Dean is charged with determining the Faculty's response to the Request. Depending on the nature of the Notice and the Request, the Dean may employ whatever individual or combination of means seems best, in their sole discretion, for undertaking a review of the Notice and Request (the "Review"), including but not limited to:
 - a) Personally interviewing the Chair and the Student;
 - b) Consulting with individuals who may have expertise in the matter, including persons identified by the Chair and/or Student;
 - c) Appointing an independent investigator or panel, who will investigate the matter, make findings, and advise the Dean; before making such appointment(s) the Dean shall first seek confirmation that no investigator or panel member has a bias or conflict of interest vis-à-vis either the Chair or the Student;
 - d) Adopting any other process that would fairly and expeditiously assist in resolving the matter.

Upon completing the Review the Dean shall provide a decision (the "Dean's Decision") in writing with reasons to the Student and Chair and order whatever actions are necessary to carry out the terms of the Dean's Decision, normally within 10 working days of receipt of the Request.

- 8) Notice Proposals and Dean's Decisions may include but are not limited to:
 - a) Requiring the Student to undertake additional course work or other training to attain the necessary mastery of the Essential Skills;
 - b) Postponing an upcoming placement or terminating a placement in progress;
 - c) Suspending a placement and/or placing a Student on probation, including terms and conditions of probation;
 - d) Withdrawing the Student from the Bachelor of Education degree program. In such cases the Student may continue in the program until the Dean's Decision is issued.

- 9) The Request and Dean's Decision process is deemed the equivalent of Step 2 of an appeal from an "Academic Decision Other than a Final Course Mark" in Section III(2) of the [Senate Policy Regarding Academic Appeals](#) (the "Senate Policy"). If a Student wishes to appeal a Dean's Decision, the Student should follow the process laid out in Step 3 and Section V of the Senate Policy, including completing and filing a "Form C" with the Secretary of the Senate Academic Appeals Committee (the "SAAC"). The student has 15 working days from receipt of a Dean's Decision to file an appeal to the SAAC.
- 10) In the interests of fairness and justice, and in their sole discretion, the Dean may authorize dispensing with strict compliance with time requirements specified in this Protocol.
- 11) All communications undertaken under this Protocol shall be conducted via Lakehead University email accounts.