

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teacher Education Program

Q&A

November 4, 2024

Question: I'm currently completing my BEd now, and I'll be done in either March or April. As of right now, I have my transitional certificate with the OCT. Would I still be able to apply for this application cycle.

Answer: That's not unusual for us. We do have people who apply when they're still in their BEd year. You will have your Oct. Certification by the time you started the program, or it would be pending. And so that's not a problem. The only thing we signal is, and we don't want to discourage anyone from applying. But when we look at application packages, experience, and what you've done can come into it. So it's just to be aware when you're a brand new teacher, by definition, are going to have a little bit less experience. So that's just something to be aware of when you're applying. That's 1 of the things we consider is how much experience someone has had.

Question: There are a couple of questions about the ASL courses, about whether you would need to have those completed before you apply, or if they can be completed before the start of the program.

Answer: You do not have to have your ASL courses completed before you apply. That's fine. We recognize that it takes time to complete those 2 courses. We do require you to have them completed by the time the program starts in August, if you're accepted.

Question: Are synchronous courses typically during school hours or in the evening?

Answer: We try to accommodate our full-time students because they've taken time to come to the program full time, so that they're finished synchronous classes about 4 or 4:30. The recordings, then, are available for you as a part-time student at any time. But if you're going to attend synchronously, it would typically be in a regular school day. We do recognize that if you're teaching full time, joining a synchronous class is usually not a possibility for you. But we welcome any of our part-time students who happen to be able to drop in on a class at, say, 10 am on a Wednesday morning. We really welcome you to do that if your schedule permits.

Question: There are some questions about the kinds of ASL courses that are accepted or that would meet our requirements.

Answer: As is the case with any language, there are language courses offered all over the place, depending on where you're at. Very introductory level courses are fine, at universities or colleges, also community agencies like Canadian Hearing Services, the Bob Rumball Center for the Deaf. Now, there are also online options. As long as something is a recognized provider of ASL instruction, we would look at that and accept that as a legitimate course that met the requirement. If you had any questions about that before you were taking a course, please feel free to get in touch with us, and we can let you know if that's if this would be an appropriate course or not. Obviously, somebody just running ASL classes in their basement isn't going to be considered a legitimate spot to go and get your ASL certification. But it does come up often, so please feel free to get in touch with us if you're in the least concerned that what you're doing isn't going to be acceptable.

Question: I wonder if you could differentiate between the ASL courses that are required for entry and the ASL proficiency that is required for enhanced course components. Could you just clarify?

Answer: The ASL courses that you're taking to get into the program can be at a very basic beginner's level. Some of you will be further along than that. Some of you might already be at that ASLPI level 3. Your courses might be at a higher level. Those are to get into the program. So many of our students aren't fluent in ASL by any means. But they have taken those 2 entry level courses

Once you're in the program, those enhanced course components that are taught in ASL as a language of instruction, then you have to have the ASL skill to take those classes in ASL Linguistics and Bilingual Bicultural Education, so that you can understand the instructor, and so that you can have enough language proficiency to engage with the content of the course, whether it's the linguistics of ASL or using ASL as the language of instruction in a sign bilingual school.

We have 3 courses that are taught with ASL as a language of instruction. One of the 3 is a course in Deaf culture and community. That one is taught in ASL but interpreting is provided, or access is provided for. Hearing people who don't sign well enough to understand the instructor in ASL can still take that course. The reason that you can take that course without the ASL skill level is the content is about Deaf culture. It's about Deaf identity and the Deaf community. You don't need ASL skill to engage with the course

content. It's learning about the community. You don't need to be able to sign to engage with that content.

Question: From an out of province student - do I need to be a member of the OCT?

Answer: You do not need to be a member of the Ontario College of Teachers. But if you're an out of province applicant, we would look for you to be registered in your jurisdiction. So in Saskatchewan or Alberta, whatever the equivalent is of the Ontario College of Teachers.

Question: A couple of questions about practicum: is it possible to do practicum in the summer, and can you clarify many weeks the practicum lasts?

Answer: No, it's not possible to do practicum outside of the school year. If you are a part-timer, and you want to do it a little bit earlier in the fall, or at certain point, sometimes in the winter term instead of in the fall for that one practicum, then that's fine. But practicum has to be completed in order to put the grades in by early May, so there's no opportunity for summertime practicum. Generally the practicum is about 20 consecutive days, and there's also some additional days that happen on an individualized basis. That happens twice. So it's altogether about 8 weeks or 40 days plus the little individual days that are kind of part of the program. 400 hours, which is what is required by the OCT.

Questions: If the mentor teacher is not evaluating us, what is our role during the practicum? Are we working alongside the mentor teacher together. Are we expected to be the lead teacher? And how does that work for the students?

Answer: At the start of the 4 weeks, the 1st week is mostly observation. So you come in, you get to know the students, you get to know the mentor teacher. You jump in when you can in different settings, and by the end of the 1st week or the end of the first 5 days, you'll be trying to teach 1 to 2 lessons a day, and then, as you go through the practicum we just keep adding on. So the mentor teacher guides you towards what it looks like, and helps you in the very beginning in lesson planning. But then, by the second, third and fourth week, you're starting to take things over, so that by the end of the 4th week, you're teaching with that mentor teacher jumping in and helping. But it's a team thing. You're both teachers in the end. Right? So you're practicing working with the deaf and hard of hearing students. And certainly in the second practicum it's even quicker. As soon as you get in, you feel like you can start doing lessons. But we also rely on the mentor teachers to hand things over as

they're comfortable, right? It's their group of students that they work with. They're often very cautious about which students can handle that in the beginning, or if they don't know you at all, because sometimes, certainly in an itinerant practicum. You only see some of the students once or twice over the 20 days. Because it's not just teaching kids. It's also making collaborations within school settings and connecting with people in the community, there's lots of different iterations of the job. And so, you know, it really depends on the situation.

Question: Can we do practicum in our 1st year of part-time?

Answer: No, and you wouldn't want to. You wouldn't know what you're doing. You're taking audiology and Deaf Studies in that 1st term, and you're taking courses to set you up for understanding. Those are great courses to set you up for understanding the learners, and what's going on in the field, and what is hearing loss, and all of those things. Who is the population that we're working with? What's our role as a teacher of the deaf?

Question: Can you clarify the difference between the core courses which are mandatory and the enhanced course components, and how that works, which courses are mandatory and which courses are not?

Answer: A lot of this is prescribed by the College of Teachers. The core courses are based on what we believe and what the College of Teachers prescribes is necessary for a teacher to become a teacher of the deaf. So, we always have to remember everybody here on the screen is already a teacher. You're already licensed to the profession as a teacher. So what you're coming and spending time doing with us is now adding to that qualification with another qualification to be a teacher of the deaf. These core courses in Audiology, which gives you the insights into the anatomy of the ear, and hearing loss, and all of that part of it that probably most of you don't know very much about. And then the language and literacy courses which you saw are huge. There are 2 of those, because you will find that those are the 2 areas for which hearing loss has the greatest impact in terms of children as learners in school, and often the areas where you will be doing the most work as teachers. Then also you'll be taking the Educational Application of Sign Language course, and that is again not a "how to sign" course. What you learn in that course is what does sign language communication have to do with educating deaf students in all of its iterations, whether it's American Sign Language or forms of signing English on the hands. You'll learn a lot more about that. The teaching and Learning seminar is the critical course that is married along with, or sits alongside the practicum. It's where you learn all the ins and outs about how to

work as a teacher of the deaf, which involves a lot more liaising with other professionals than you might experience as a typical teacher, and the last course in the core is an intense one week course that I teach with my colleagues, Pam and Melanie. That's the Introduction to Deaf Studies. But it's also the introduction to the program. And it's an orientation week where each of the main 4 things we study, Audiology and Language and Literacy and Deaf culture and the practicum are all introduced to you in a week in August, where both full and part-time students participate synchronously. It's the one time in your career as a part-time student with us, where you attend synchronous class along with the full time students. So those are the core courses, and those are designed to be the foundation.

The enhanced course components, you can think of as refining those with an emphasis, perhaps on an area where you have more interest or more expertise, so you might lean more towards courses that focus on spoken language, the Listening and Speaking course, the Classroom Amplification course that Pam talked about, the technology course. Or you might lean more towards taking the Bilingual Bicultural Education and sign language courses. If you have that skill in American sign language to teach in that setting. So they add to what you've already learned in the core.

Although there is a list of 6 enhanced course component courses, and you can choose 3, It's not exactly an open choice of 3, because 2 of them have a language proficiency requirement. If you are proficient in American Sign Language, all 6 are available to you. If you are not, then those courses you wouldn't be able to take.

Question: Are school boards, generally supportive of teachers asking for leave to complete practicum for the part-time students?

Answer: It's a good idea to let your school board know that you're in the program, and that by 3rd year you will be looking to take a leave. There is always a possibility that if you're working in the right setting, we may be able to use your job for a practicum placement if you've been hired in that capacity, and in that case school boards would definitely be supportive. But I don't think I've ever seen anybody be told they can't take a leave for a certain amount of time given that it's an additional qualification course, and it's a requirement of the OCT. So I would say, just make sure that they're aware and that you're on track to make a request. Some school boards require that by April of the year before, so they can plan for it. In terms of when to do that, that might be what you want to communicate with your School Board about. Would it be better if I just did one in one year, and in a certain period of time when they might be able to replace you better? And that's

definitely something that we can work with each person individually. In the Teaching and Learning seminar, we sit down right in the very beginning to work through those situations.

Question: What are the odds of having a job after you graduate as a teacher of the deaf?

Answer: Like everything in teaching these days, there are a lot of people retiring, people leaving post Covid, lots of reasons. I think all 3 of us could say that we get calls, not on a weekly basis, but often throughout the year, saying, “Do you have anyone who's graduating soon? Do you have someone who could come and teach in School Board XY or Z?” So there are jobs, particularly if you have some mobility and are willing to move around. That's I know, easier for some folks than others. If you've got 2 kids, a dog, a cat, and a husband, it can be harder to uproot and move yourself, but if you have flexibility you can in all likelihood get a job in teaching deaf and hard of hearing students. It's a great job to do and the kids that you meet are amazing. But that being said, most school boards don't have 20 teachers of the deaf, they have one or two or three. So that's why we're saying you might have to be a bit flexible, and where you think you might like to be working.

Question: If we're more interested in the itinerant role, can we request our practicums be with an itinerant teacher?

Answer: Nowadays it's almost better for you to have 2 itinerant practicum placements, because that's really what the job is. More than anything. There are very few congregated setting placements anymore for teachers, not to say we don't sometimes put people in those places for practicum, but for the most part, it's an itinerant position that you're going out in. Obviously the schools for the deaf also have programming. And if you're somebody who's proficient in American Sign Language and are interested in a practicum placement that would be more of a regular classroom setting. But yes, you definitely will be doing a practicum with an itinerant teacher, maybe even for both of your practicum placements.

The general public may not realize that most students now who are deaf or hard of hearing, are educated in mainstream settings. That is a shift from when this program first started, when most students were in, Melanie used the word congregated. We just use that term to say they were either at a school for the deaf or within a classroom of deaf students within a regular school, but all the kids who are deaf or hard of hearing were together in one group. That is now not the norm; now, most kids are in inclusive settings.

Question: What ASL courses are accepted for the entry requirement?

Answer: We're really very flexible in terms of where you take those courses, have a look around. There are often community organizations, such as the Bob Rumball Centre, Canadian Hearing Services and Canadian Hearing Services has offices across Ontario, so you may be able to find a course at a local level if that makes more sense for you in terms of scheduling than something, say at a university. If you're not sure, ask us.

Question: How many people do we accept into the program?

Answer: Our program is the largest program in Canada, there are only 3 English language programs to become a teacher of the deaf. We're obviously the one in Ontario. There's one in British Columbia, and there's one in Nova Scotia, but we are the largest in terms of number of students. So our total enrollment is somewhere 50, give or take. So that includes a full-time cohort and 3 part-time cohorts. So a group in year 1, a group in year 2 and a group in year 3 plus any people who took more time to finish. So that that's what makes up our 50. So every year we accept a new full time cohort, and a new part time cohort, and each of those groups is about 10 each. So every year give or take, we're bringing in about 20 people. We do always have more people applying than we have places.

If you haven't gone to the website, please do. One of the things you'll find there is some information about our 30th anniversary. You'll see some stories, vignettes of some of the graduates of our program who are profiled through that anniversary link, and you can read about some of the really interesting things that our graduates are doing.