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INTRODUCTION

Dear TFA Students,

A warm welcome to each of you at the start of your GSE/TFA journey. We appreciate how overwhelming it is when one must adapt quickly to a large set of regulations from two institutions. Therefore, we have tried to summarize them for you below and cited places where you can read more about the rules that govern Penn and the services to which you, as students, are entitled. We want you to appreciate that even when the regulations do not seem essential to you, there are serious consequences when they are ignored. Please be careful of requirements and deadlines. We also urge you to attend to the emails that we send out during the year for important information about the program and changes to it that sometimes occur, without much notice, due to the complexities of our partnership with TFA.

For further information about academic, financial, arts, cultural, and recreational resources at Penn and in Philadelphia, as well as student resources and services please see Penn’s Graduate School Student Resource Guide and the University Web site.

We also urge you to peruse the Graduate School of Education Handbook. For information on your academic rights and responsibilities, you may find the following pages in the Handbook of particular interest:
- Code of Academic Integrity
- GSE Committee on Degrees
- University Ombudsman
- Students with Disabilities
- Access to Student Records
- Policy on Secular and Religious Holidays

The most important value of an academic institution is the preservation of academic integrity. To be fair and comprehensive GSE, in keeping with this tradition, has elaborated a fairly complex code. Make sure you understand it.

TFA students, while largely in a separate cohort from other master’s degree students at GSE, have all the rights and privileges of a graduate student at GSE. Please avail yourselves of the social and intellectual opportunities as well as the services available to students.

As questions arise, please contact the GSE/TFA program Office at 215-746-4855 or email mary1@gse.upenn.edu.
PROGRAM STANDARDS

The PennGSE Teach for America Urban Teacher program is a partnership with Teach for America, located in a professional graduate school, and nested in an historic university with a strong liberal arts tradition. The program standards draw from the interconnections between Penn’s Graduate School of Education and our affiliated institutions.

(1) As partners with TFA we embrace the principle of equity in education. We strive to work with our teachers/students towards increased opportunities for urban students. We share TFA’s conviction that the inequities in our country imperil the future of our children and blight the values of our nation. We recognize that a teacher can have a strong impact on the lives of her students, in preparing them to become able citizens who achieve fulfilling, productive, and meaningful lives.

(2) In keeping with the orientation of Penn’s Graduate School of Education, we emphasize inquiry and reflection. Inquiry is directed to subject matter as students increase their own expertise and make considered choices in the content of their instruction. Since our students are full-time teachers, inquiry is also directed to reflecting on teaching practices, how those practices can grow to be ever more purposeful and effective, and how pedagogy relates to educational purposes. Reflection is directed to ourselves as well, how we see ourselves as teachers, how we integrate this new role into our self-identity, how the role changes us and we change the role through experience and thought. Finally, reflection and inquiry are directed to ways in which teachers and students can become communities of learners, extending community beyond the school walls.

(3) In keeping with the traditions of the University of Pennsylvania, we are committed to a broad understanding of education that includes both its practical and intellectual aspects. The program considers the immediate daily needs of our students, offering them direct mentoring in their classrooms and courses in methods of instruction. We also consider the less visible, but nonetheless powerful, forces that shape the education system by offering a menu of perspective courses from which students select. At all levels, we honor the controversies and disagreements that characterize a democracy.

(4) As educators, a focus on the child is unswervingly central. We appreciate that there are many kinds of children as there are many kinds of teachers. Just as there is no one way to teach, so is there no one way to learn. Within this diversity, however, we emphasize the centrality of student engagement in education and strong teacher-student relationships. While students are required to learn certain prescribed material, teachers (and schools) are obligated to hear children’s voices, to enhance their interest, motivation, and participation.
TEACHER CERTIFICATION PROGRAM
REQUIREMENTS

Teacher Certification

Intern or emergency certification
When you begin teaching you are required to have an intern or emergency certification in the area in which you are teaching. You must:
- Complete a 338G form, signed by a doctor.
- Purchase a $100 money order made out to “The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania”.
- Pass the appropriate Praxis exams and have the scores sent to GSE/UPenn.

Teaching Certification Coursework
The GSE/TFA certification programs are approved by both the Pennsylvania and New Jersey Departments of Education. Therefore the coursework fulfills the requirements of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the state of New Jersey. All GSE/TFA students take the required courses for Pennsylvania and New Jersey certification in elementary, middle years, or secondary education (except for those who are already certified). There are seven required courses for general education certification, and ten for dual certification in general and special education. All students must take and successfully complete these courses in order to meet state certification requirements.

GSE/TFA offers coursework required for the following certifications:

Pennsylvania & New Jersey
- Elementary: PA PreK-4th grade; NJ K-5th grade.
- Middle Grades: PA 4-8th; NJ 5-8th with specialization in English, Math, Social Studies or General Science.

Additionally, students can earn either PreK-8 or 7-12th Special Education through the dual certification program.
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Upon completion of the program, PennGSE will recommend you for certification from either PA or NJ if you have:

- Had two formal observations from a Penn Mentor in your area of certification and received a satisfactory rating on the state of Pennsylvania observation forms (2).
- A 3.0 GPA.
- Demonstrated good moral character as defined by state and university policy.

**Certification Program Credits**

Certification-only students take the seven required courses at a reduced rate. Certification courses (EDCE) cannot be used towards any degree program.

**Changes in Teaching Placement**

If at any point your teaching placement changes in either grade level or content area, you must contact GSE immediately so that you can be placed in the proper coursework for certification. For example, if you are switched from 9th grade math to 9th grade science, or from 3rd grade to 5th grade, PennGSE must be made aware of this change. Failure to do so may compromise your ability to be certified at the end of the program. As soon as you are notified of a change in placement it is your responsibility to
make the director and your instructors aware of this change.

**Mentor Program**

Upon admission, all students will be assigned a mentor who supports them in the on-going process of becoming competent teachers. Mentors participate in direct observation of corps members and encourage connections between coursework and practice. Mentors also work with instructors and TFA staff to provide comprehensive support to new teachers.

Mentors are responsible for the completion of two Pennsylvania State Formal Observation forms (January and May). They will also provide teachers with feedback in the form of written records and discussions of classroom observations. Maintaining weekly communication with your mentor is required for both successful completion of the program and for becoming certified. Failure to do so may compromise your ability to complete this program and/or become certified in the state of Pennsylvania.

The GSE/TFA Program arranges for on-site mentoring in Camden as specified by New Jersey.

**Placement Requirements For PA Intern Teachers**

Required experiences and observations will be conducted in teachers’ assigned placement schools. All placements are made by Teach for America. Cyber charter schools are not currently recognized as placements that fulfill the PA certification requirements for experience and observation.

**Teachers seeking PA PreK-4 Certification**

A 12-week minimum placement as the Teacher of Record in a general education classroom from grades pre-K to 4th.

An additional 90 hours of supervised observation and experience in the two other grade bands that are not included in the primary placement:

- Pre-Kindergarten
- K-1st grade
- 2nd-4th grade

(The minimum split for hours between placements is 30/60 hours.)

**Teachers seeking dual (general education & special education) PA Certification**

A 12-week minimum placement as the Teacher of Record in either a general education or special education classroom that meets:

- Requirements for PreK-4, 4-8, or 7-12 general education certification, PLUS an
additional 240 supervised hours towards meeting special education fieldwork competencies and experiences.

OR

• Requirements for K-8 or 7-12 special education certification, PLUS an additional 240 supervised hours towards meeting general education fieldwork competencies and experiences.

MASTER’S DEGREE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Master of Science in Education (M.S.Ed.)
To earn an M.S.Ed. degree, the student must:
• Be formally admitted to a master’s degree program in the Graduate School of Education.
• Complete 10 course units and pass the master’s special area course and writing project. Students must be registered in the term they graduate. If coursework has been completed, or a student is submitting work for previous Incompletes, the student must be registered for Master’s Registration (EDUC 990) during the term in which the examination is taken. The cost is approximately $750 a term.
• Have a GPA of 3.0 or better.
• Have paid tuition for all previous semesters.

Course Requirements
Master’s and Certification students take the same courses for the summer, fall, and spring of the first year.

May and June, Year 1: Master’s students take an elective during May and June of the first year. This course is generally offered on Tuesday and Thursday nights for six weeks.

Fall and spring, Year 2: Master’s students take a year-long special topic course during the second year. The first semester is devoted to studying a particular area and the second semester to conducting a project in the specialized area that includes literature review, data collection, and (usually) writing a thesis of 30-40 pages.

Switching Programs (Master’s to certification or certification to Master’s) Certification students may only elect to transfer into the Masters program before the add/drop period of the fall in their first year. They will be charged the Master’s rate for these courses.
Master’s students may transfer into the Certification program only before the add/drop period each term. They will be charged the Certification rate for courses after that time, but will not be reimbursed for Master’s level course tuition already taken.

Graduation Requirements
The GSE academic calendar lists the deadlines for completing degree requirements in order to graduate in any academic term. All degree candidates must apply to graduate online at the beginning of the term in which they plan to receive the degree. Failure to apply for graduation by the published deadline will make it impossible to receive the degree at the time desired.

- Students must apply to graduate on-line by the deadline listed on the GSE academic calendar.
- All coursework, including the final Master's project must be complete.
- Students must be registered in the term in which they intend to graduate.
- Students’ bills must be paid in full.

GSE holds a commencement ceremony each year in May for students who will be receiving their degrees in that term, as well as for those who completed their degrees in the previous year. Additionally, students who will be receiving their degrees the following August may participate in the May ceremony if they:

- Maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0.
  AND
- Have completed eight course units of a 10 course unit program.
  AND
- Have passed the Master's project.

STUDENT PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

Grades and Student Evaluation
All students in the Graduate School of Education are expected to maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 for all courses applied toward degree requirements. Failure to maintain this minimum standard of satisfactory performance may result in exclusion from further study in the Graduate School of Education.

In addition to the grade point average requirement, continuation in all degree programs of the Graduate School of Education is dependent upon maintenance of satisfactory performance through all phases of the program as judged by the program leaders and instructors.

Student evaluation is the prerogative and responsibility of the faculty and an important educative act. Each student is entitled to the careful and timely review of his or her academic work. Grades are the means by which such evaluations are efficiently communicated to external groups (e.g., doctoral admissions committees, fellowship
committees, employers) and, most importantly, to the student. The compression of grades in the upper range (grade inflation) has occurred at many colleges and universities and the phenomenon is particularly prevalent at highly selective institutions. There are, of course, circumstances in which grades may be somewhat skewed toward the upward range such as independent studies or small advanced doctoral seminars. Further, some faculty members use the “mastery” approach to teaching, providing students with feedback and the opportunity to rework certain assignments for a higher grade.

Nevertheless, without variation in grades, it is impossible to differentiate between “distinguished” work (the criterion for an A in the graduate grading system at Penn) and “good” work (the criterion for a B). Grade inflation is problematic because it unfairly penalizes students whose exemplary work deserves to stand apart through the recognition of an A. Inflated grades also can mislead students and give them an unreasonably optimistic assessment of their performance. At Penn, the expectation is that grade distributions in courses fall predominantly in the A to B range and that the notional mean of most courses (excluding small seminars and so forth and subject to the professional judgment of individual faculty members) is a B+.

**Attendance and Lateness**

Attendance is crucial to successfully completing the GSE/TFA Certification and Master’s programs. We realize that there are occasional emergencies including sickness, required and important school events. However, attendance and participation are significant for both your successful completion of this program and consequently your teaching certification. You should also be aware that each weekend class that you miss is approximately 20 - 25% of a course.

If you have to miss a class, you must inform your instructor.

We also understand that you are coming from school to attend classes. However, we expect you to come on time. Attendance and lateness could affect your grade. Excessive absences could result in a failure for the course. An on-going pattern of absences could result in dismissal from the program.

A deduction of 5% on your grade will be made for unexcused absences, repeated lateness, and unexcused tardy papers. The instructor will determine how absences are to be made up.

**Incompletes**

Students are expected to complete all coursework during the semester in which a course is taken. However, faculty members may give a grade of Incomplete to a student who is unable to finish course assignments by the end of the term. No GSE instructor is required to give grades of Incomplete. It is up to each faculty member to decide if and when Incompletes will be given. When an Incomplete is assigned, both the faculty member and the student must comply with school regulations governing the timely completion of coursework. All incomplete coursework must be turned in by the deadline for graduation.
FINANCES

Tuition
Gross tuition and fee costs are determined by the number of course units (CU’s) students take per term. Tuition bills are e-mailed by the Student Financial Services Office prior to the start of the academic term. Tuition is due upon receipt of bill. An unpaid balance of $500 or more will prevent students from registering for the next semester.

Refunds and Resignation
Resigning from the GSE/TFA Program
If you leave teaching and TFA in the middle of a semester you will not be reimbursed by UPenn unless you do so before the Drop/Request period. After that you can get 75% or 50% reimbursement up until a certain date. After that final date you will not be reimbursed any funds. You have the option of completing the courses for the semester that you leave.

GSE Policy on Refund of Tuition and Fees
A student who withdraws from the Graduate School of Education, who is requested to withdraw for failure to maintain a satisfactory scholastic standard, or who is granted a leave of absence will be eligible for a full refund of tuition and general fee during the Drop/Request period. Withdrawal from the University after the Drop/Request period is permitted, but students will not receive a refund of tuition or fees.

The effective date of separation from the University is the date on which the student files a written request for withdrawal or leave of absence with the Director, who will communicate with the Office of the Assistant Dean. A student who is required to withdraw because of violation of University regulations will receive no refund by reason of such withdrawal. Neither late registration nor absence during the term shall entitle the student to a reduction in fees.

Fees
General
The amount of the general fee is based on the number of courses taken. The general fee enables the University to maintain essential facilities such as the library system, museums and institutes, special laboratories, the Student Health Service, athletics, and Career Services, all of which provide benefits to students both before and after graduation.

Special Service
A student who is on leave of absence, or not taking courses (e.g., during the Summer term), may use the library and recreational facilities upon payment of a special service fee.
Late Penalty Charge
Registered students are required to pay the tuition bill within the time period specified by the Student Financial Services Office on the bill. If full payment is not made by the due date, a late penalty charge of 1.5% a month (or partial month) will be imposed on the outstanding balance.

Late Graduation Notification
If students fail to notify the Student Records Office of their plan to receive a degree by the published deadline, they may in some cases still register to graduate upon payment of a fee of $25. Students should check the academic calendar for final dates on which late applications will be received.

Fee for Transcript
Current students and alumni from the class of 1988 or later can use Penn InTouch to place orders and pay for transcripts using a Visa or MasterCard. Currently enrolled students who are not within 8 weeks of graduation can charge the order to their student account. If you prefer, you can also order transcripts by mail or in person at the Registrar’s Office.

Payment of Fees
Payments due the University must be made in cash, check, bank draft or postal money order for the exact amount due, drawn to the order of the Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania. Students will be charged a fee for any check returned by a bank for “insufficient funds” or any other reason other than a bank error. In addition, the University reserves the right to require a cashier’s check, or other similar instrument for any payment following return of a check by a bank. If there are extenuating circumstances that affect payment of one’s bill, students should contact a representative from the Student Financial Services Office.

Nonpayment of Tuition and/or Fees
The University reserves the right to withhold registration material, transcripts and all other information regarding the record of any student who is delinquent in the payment of tuition, fees, or any other charges, including student loans, and to exclude such a student from classes, examinations, and graduation. The student will be held accountable for all absences resulting from the operation of this rule. For continued delinquency in the payment of debts to the University, the student may be permanently dropped from the University. The enforcement of this penalty shall not relieve the student of the obligation to pay any outstanding fees and charges, including those for the term to which the penalty applies. No one shall be granted a certificate of withdrawal or be recommended for a degree who has not paid in full all his or her financial obligations.

Financial Aid Certification Only
Students are only eligible for aid in the first year. Loans will not be due until 6 months after completing the program. It is recommended that students borrow the full
amount for the program in the first year and use the credit balance to pay the second year’s tuition.

Complete your FAFSA: www.fafsa.ed.gov

Review Loan Terms and Application Instructions
Direct Loans: http://www.sfs.upenn.edu/loans/grad-direct-loan.htm
Review Student Registration and Financial Services “Must Do” Checklist: http://www.sfs.upenn.edu/mustdo/

Adjust Direct Loan to Desired Amount
Log onto the Penn Loan System to make adjustments: www.sfs.upenn.edu/loans

AmeriCorps Grants
We suggest that you have the AmeriCorps grant sent directly to the university. If your bill has already been paid by federal loans the AmeriCorps grant will be refunded to you from your student account. These funds can be used to reduce borrowing in the second year. You will not be eligible for teacher loan forgiveness if you have used any part of the loan to pay a private lender directly. Students who will not continue teaching after the program may send their award directly to their lender to reduce debt. For further information on AmeriCorps Grants please contact the TeachForAmerica offices.

Important notes for all students about financial aid and Upenn bills
These must be taken care of in a timely fashion. If you do not take care of your loans or pay your bills, you will be on financial hold and in danger of some or all of the following: not being registered for your courses; having late charges added to your bills; having your loans cancelled; having your bills sent to a collection agency.

Make sure you respond to all e-mails from Student Financial Services (sfs@upenn.edu) and that they have your correct e-mail. In the near future, everything will be electronic.

All the information you need is on the Student Financial Services web site on the University of Pennsylvania web site (http://www.sfs.upenn.edu/).