**Pre-Practicum Gateways – Frequently Asked Questions**

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**What is a Pre-Practicum Gateway?**

The [Pre-Practicum Guidelines](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/domains/field-based/pre-practicum.docx) require that, beginning in the 2020-2021 school year, Sponsoring Organizations evaluate initial licensure teacher candidate performance in early field-based experiences (the “pre-practicum”) by administering at least two licensure-specific performance tasks, or “gateways.” Gateways provide SOs with an opportunity to 1) identify at-risk candidates and provide them with the necessary supports and guidance to improve or exit the program (The Candidate Criterion 4) and 2) monitor individual licensure programs to ensure that each is effective (Continuous Improvement Criterion 1).

Per the [Pre-Practicum Guidelines](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/domains/field-based/pre-practicum.docx), gateways must meet the following criteria:

1. Involve a performance-based task assessing content-specific pedagogical skill (both PSTs and SMKs).
2. Be administered consistently within an SO’s licensure program area. For example, any candidate enrolled in an SO’s Elementary 1-6 program, whether baccalaureate or post-baccalaureate, will be expected to participate in and pass the same gateway assessment as identified by the SO, regardless of their courses or instructor assignment. Sponsoring Organizations may request to waive this requirement for individual candidates as needed.
3. Include clearly defined minimum performance standards that candidates must meet in order to pass the gateway and ultimately advance beyond the pre-practicum.

In addition to the minimum requirements set forth in the guidelines, *high-quality* gateways:

* Assess individual, independent candidate performance such that it is possible to fully isolate candidate performance from that of peers, Supervising Practitioner, or others.
* Assess pedagogical skill(s) embedded in the [Professional Standards for Teachers](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/resources/guidelines-advisories/teachers-guide.docx) that *build towards* candidates’ ability to demonstrate readiness on the [Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP)'s essential elements](http://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/cap/).
* Involve a discrete task representing a *snapshot* of candidate performance during the pre-practicum and is not a comprehensive, multi-point, long-term assessment (e.g. CAP).
* Require candidate to demonstrate [fluency in the subject-matter](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/domains/instruction/smk-guidelines.docx) they are teaching.
* Are centered on an instructional task that is authentic and integral to the work of an effective educator in the licensure role.
* Include a scoring guide that sets minimum thresholds of performance that are sufficiently rigorous to assess readiness for the practicum.

**Why are the model gateways called “tasks” and not “assessments”?**

Gateways are called “tasks” rather than “assessments” in order to clarify the expectation that gateways should assess candidate’s performance in discrete skills embedded in the Professional Standards for Teachers (PSTs) and Subject Matter Knowledge guidelines (SMKs) and represent a *snapshot* of candidate performance during the pre-practicum. Gateways are not intended to be comprehensive, multi-point, long-term assessments such as the Candidate Assessment of Performance (CAP).

**Are Sponsoring Organizations required to use model gateways or submit their gateways for DESE approval?**

No, SOs can use model gateways as desired or use alternatives. SOs are not required to submit gateways for DESE’s approval but are encouraged to contribute gateways to the Bank for potential adoption across the Commonwealth. SOs may select and/or design gateways insofar as they meet the criteria set forth in the Guidelines.

**When in pre-practicum should gateways be administered?**

According to the Guidelines, Sponsoring Organizations shall administer gateways to benchmark candidate readiness at least at two junctures prior to the practicum. The Guidelines do not specify when, prior to practicum, gateways must be administered. SOs may consider administering gateways in line with the progression of pre-practicum from “Stage 1” activities to “Stage 2” activities (see the Guidelines for further context around these stages).

**How many gateways are required for candidates pursuing dual licensure?**

Candidates completing two separate programs for endorsement (Dual Licensure) will participate in gateway tasks at least two junctures before practicum for each licensure program. If/when a gateway task is assessing PSTs and SMKs that are *common to both licensure areas* in a dual licensure program (e.g. Elementary and Moderate Disabilities), gateway task(s) may be used to benchmark candidate readiness in both licensure programs. However, no less than two must be implemented for any given candidate. (\*Note: it is still the expectation that a gateway task be used consistently across respective licensure programs (i.e. a gateway task should not be unique to dual licensure, nor developed specifically for an individual candidate pursuing dual licensure).)

**Can observations be used as gateways?**

Yes, one or more of the observations required in the Guidelines may also function as a gateway insofar as it meets the criteria set forth in the Guidelines, including:

* The observation/gateway assesses candidate practice of the PSTs and SMKs in PK-12 settings and/or with PK12 students;
* The individuals responsible for providing feedback to candidates receive the training and support necessary to do so effectively;
* The observation rubric/scoring criteria is applied consistently across an SO’s licensure program area; and
* The observation/gateway includes clearly defined minimum performance standards that candidates must meet in order to pass the assessment and ultimately advance beyond the pre-practicum.

**Can gateways focus on elements other than those from the CAP rubric?**

Yes. Gateways should assess candidate’s performance in discrete skills embedded in the Professional Standards for Teachers (PSTs) and Subject Matter Knowledge guidelines (SMKs) that build towards candidate readiness for CAP.

**Will DESE collect data from the gateways?**

DESE will not collect gateway data in the way that we collect CAP data, but SOs are expected to independently collect and monitor this data in order to identify at risk candidates, monitor individual program effectiveness, and support continuous improvement. An SO may also cite gateway data in DESE’s formal review process.

**How should Sponsoring Organizations that have partnerships with Community Colleges implement the gateway requirement?**

While SOs have ultimate responsibility for evaluating candidate readiness for the practicum, SOs may partner with Community Colleges to administer agreed-upon gateway tasks in line with the expectations set forth in the Guidelines or else may elect to administer the gateway prior to the candidate beginning CAP.

**Can Sponsoring Organizations waive the requirement for gateways?**

In accordance with the Regulations Governing Program Approval ([603 CMR 7.03 (1) (b](http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr7.html?section=03)), SOs may waive gateway requirements for individual candidates but may not design a program dependent upon a waiver.

*For more information, please see the* [*Pre-Practicum Guidelines*](https://www.doe.mass.edu/edprep/domains/field-based/pre-practicum.docx) *or contact* *educatorpreparation@mass.gov**.*