

# Stony Brook University English Teacher Education Program

Dr. Ken Lindblom  
Director of English Teacher Education  
and Associate Professor of English  
[kenneth.lindblom@stonybrook.edu](mailto:kenneth.lindblom@stonybrook.edu)  
**FAQs last updated: April 28, 2013**

**Disclaimer:** The information in this document is true to the best of my knowledge and is intended to be of informal help to those interested in our programs. The information on this page must not be considered legally binding. –KL

This long document answers questions about the MAT Program, the BA-MA Program, and the BA Program. It answers questions about applying to the program and about how the program works once students are admitted. Scroll down to find the questions that interest you.

**Prospective MAT Applicants:** We are a small, competitive program. The English Department will admit up to about 10 students to the MAT English program each semester. Only applications submitted to the School of Professional Development by the deadline (March 31 or October 31 of the previous semester) will be considered. If seats remain, *exceptionally* strong students may be admitted after the deadline. More information may be found below and at the following website:  
<http://ws.cc.stonybrook.edu/spd/graduate/matenglish.html>

**MAT Applicants will be judged by the following criteria:**

- Overall Undergraduate GPA and GPA in English Courses (MAT applicants must have an undergraduate English major; others should consider our second bachelor's program—see below)
- Strength of Letters of Recommendation
- Quality of Application Essay
- GRE Scores (General Exams only; special subject exams not required); A GRE Verbal score of about 160 (600 on the old scoring system) is desirable
- One year of college-level foreign language (or the equivalent)

## ***FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS***

These questions and answers have been designed to assist students interested in our English Teacher Education Programs **and** those already enrolled in them. Almost every question the Program Director has ever been asked about the program is answered in this document. Read the entire document, and you will likely find an answer to your question.

Prospective students are highly encouraged to read this entire document carefully, as it probably gives them all the information they need to succeed in the program. In the event that your question is not answered on this site, the Director will be happy to answer you directly. The best way to contact him is through email ([kenneth.lindblom@stonybrook.edu](mailto:kenneth.lindblom@stonybrook.edu)).

### ***General Questions***

#### **1. What can I teach with a degree from this program?**

At the completion of our MAT or BA program you will have earned New York State Initial Certification in Adolescence English Education, which will allow you to teach English to students in grades 7-12 throughout New York State and in over 3 dozen other US states with which NYS has reciprocal agreements. In some cases, you may need to take an additional exam to teach in other states. You may have heard that getting hired as an English teacher with a master's degree is more difficult because you would earn a higher salary; that rumor is completely false in our experience.

#### **2. If I already have a bachelor's degree, can I earn teacher certification without getting another full degree?**

Perhaps, but not at Stony Brook University. Other programs may allow you to take only those courses you need to earn your initial certificate through what is called "Alternate Route Certification." At Stony Brook, we will only certify students who have gone through our entire degree program. It's important to us that local school districts know Stony Brook teacher education students have had the advantage of our entire program.

#### **3. If I have a bachelor's degree, but my major was not English, how can I earn English Teacher Certification through Stony Brook University?**

You have two options. Option 1 is preferred; option 2 is recommended only for those for whom option 1 will not work.

Option 1: If you have a bachelor's degree, but your major was not English you may earn English Teacher Certification from Stony Brook in our Second Bachelor's Program:

Apply to Stony Brook University for admission as an undergraduate student in a "**Second Baccalaureate Program in English.**" The Stony Brook University Admissions Office will review your transcript to see what general education courses are already covered in your first bachelor's degree. Then you should consult the Undergraduate English Major Advisor to learn what English courses you will need in order to complete your English major. When you meet with the English Major Advisor, you should also meet informally with the Director of English Teacher Education. You should not formally

apply for the Undergraduate English Teacher Education Program until you are in your first semester as an English major.

Option 2: The second bachelor's program is the preferred route for those without a BA in English; however, if you already have 18 credits of English in your BA, you are not eligible for a second bachelor's in English. Also, Stony Brook may occasionally not admit anyone to the second bachelor's program if the freshman class is especially large. If either of these is your case, you may be able to enter the MAT program by taking 36 credits of EGL courses before you apply to the MAT. This route is not recommended because it's entirely possible that an applicant could take all those undergraduate courses and still not be competitive enough for a seat in our program. Students who elect to take 36 credits of English should use the BA Advising Sheet to select courses, should take a mixture of upper- and lower-division courses, and should contact the Program Director (Professor Lindblom) for advice. Your goal is to take courses that closely approximate an English major.

#### **4. I'm not sure if I'd rather teach secondary school or college English. Is the MAT the right degree for me?**

Possibly. The best way to prepare yourself for a job as a college English professor is to get into a good PhD program in English. The best degree for that purpose is an MA in English. The MAT degree is split between coursework in English and coursework in teaching. While teaching experience can certainly help prepare you to teach college, it is not necessarily what will make you attractive to highly competitive PhD programs. Unfortunately, we do not currently offer an MA that leads to English teacher certification (the BA-MA Program is an exception; see below). However, the MAT does not rule you out of PhD programs in English. If you choose the MAT and may want to teach college English in the future, you should do your best to earn high grades in English and pursue conference presentations and even publications in English; you should also become actively involved in Stony Brook's English Graduate Organization. If you earn the MAT and you really enjoy your teaching courses, you might pursue a PhD in education later; an MAT is an excellent degree for making you attractive to education PhD programs. If you prefer the field of English to education, you should look at information available at the Modern Language Association website, if you're interested in becoming a professor of literature ([www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)) or the Conference on College Composition and Communication, if you're interested in becoming a professor of writing or rhetoric (<http://www.ncte.org/cccc>).

#### **5. How long will it take me to finish this program?**

The MAT program is a minimum of 44 credits, 35 of which must be completed before your student teaching semester (which is where the additional 9 credits come from). Given the rigor of the program and the availability of required coursework, **you should expect the MAT degree to take 4 semesters to complete.** In addition, if you have not completed at least 5 of the 10 NCTE content area requirements (see

below) before joining our program, you may require more than 44 credits to finish. You must also have completed a year of foreign language at the college level.

The BA English Teacher Education Program requires a minimum of 3 semesters (as part of the BA in English Program). If students have not been admitted to the English Teacher Education Program by the second semester of their junior year, it is advisable that they consider finishing their BA in English and then apply for our MAT English program to earn teacher certification; otherwise earning certification will delay completion of the BA degree by a year or more.

#### **6. Can I teach in other states if I earn NYS teacher certification?**

Yes. Several dozen states recognize NYS Certification. In some cases, you may have to take the state's standardized test or complete other fairly minor requirements for to teach in other states.

#### **7. What courses may I transfer into the program?**

NCTE content area requirements may be fulfilled by courses taken at other colleges, but you need not transfer them for the courses to count for this purpose. We simply need a copy of your transcript with these courses included. For additional information on transferring courses for the BA program, please see the *Undergraduate Bulletin*, *The Transfer Guide*, and the English Major Advisor. MAT students may transfer up to 6 credits to the program. See Dr. Lindblom or Dr. Glockner in the School of Professional Development to determine whether or not credits transferred may fulfill MAT requirements. To transfer graduate courses from another institution to an MAT degree, fill out the "Transfer Credit Request" form found on the bottom right column of the SPD Homepage:

<http://www.stonybrook.edu/spd/current/forms.html>. For MAT students, a year of college-level foreign language is also required; foreign language courses need not be taken at Stony Brook, nor must they be transferred to SBU for the MAT degree program. If your undergraduate college allowed your high school foreign language to count as a year of college-level foreign language, have your undergraduate school's Registrar write a letter to that effect for you, and include it in your MAT application; such a letter will fulfill your foreign language requirement for the MAT as well.

#### **8. Once I'm admitted, what are the requirements for remaining in good standing?**

Undergraduate students must maintain a 2.75 gpa to remain in good standing, but a 3.0 is required for student teaching. (*These requirements are likely to become more rigorous shortly to mirror increasing standards in teacher education generally.*) MAT students must have a minimum of a 3.0 gpa and earn no less than a B in all education courses and no less than a B- in all MAT content area requirements. All students at both levels must have a minimum of a 3.0 gpa to be approved for student teaching.

**9. My question isn't answered on this FAQ list. Where can I get more information?**

For general application questions or questions about NYS Certification policies, contact Dr. Marvin Glockner, the SBU Teacher Certification Officer ([marvin.glockner@stonybrook.edu](mailto:marvin.glockner@stonybrook.edu)) or 631-632-7055. For academic questions about English, contact Dr. Ken Lindblom, the Director of English Teacher Education ([kenneth.lindblom@stonybrook.edu](mailto:kenneth.lindblom@stonybrook.edu)).

***Questions About The BA-MA Program***

**10. What is the BA-MA Program?**

The Combined BA-MA Program allows students early admission into the MA English Program and allows students to take 4 graduate English courses in place of undergraduate courses that are similar in content. The combined degree leads to English Teacher Certification; students may also select not to earn English Teacher Certification. Students from other colleges are welcome to transfer into this program. Students in the BA-MA program who are also earning teacher certification should complete all education requirements at the undergraduate level, with the exception of EGL 360 (take CEJ 552 instead) and WRT 392 (take EGL 592 instead).

**11. Where can I get more information about the BA-MA Program?**

For additional information, see this link: <http://bit.ly/150ZsPF>. Dr. Andrew Newman is the Director of Graduate Studies in English and he is also the director of the BA-MA Program. Please contact him for additional information about the BA-MA Program: [Andrew.newman@stonybrook.edu](mailto:Andrew.newman@stonybrook.edu).

***Questions About Applying to Our Programs***

**1. Questions about the MAT in English (Master of Arts in Teaching—English)**

**i. When and how should I apply for the MAT in English?**

Applications to begin the MAT program in the Fall are due March 31<sup>st</sup> of the same year. Applications to begin the program in the Spring are due October 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous year. Please note that MAT applications are facilitated by the School of Professional Development, not by the Graduate School. Students who submit the wrong application **will not be considered for admission**. For more information regarding the MAT, see this website: <http://ws.cc.stonybrook.edu/spd/graduate/matenglish.html>. All MAT applications are submitted online.

**ii. Should I take courses as a non-matriculated student before applying? If so, which courses should I take?**

Taking courses non-matriculated can be a good way of shortening your time-to-degree and a good way of enhancing the competitiveness of your application (especially if you can get a letter of recommendation from the course professor); however, it is a risk because there is no guarantee you will be admitted to the program.

Because we are most concerned that applications for English Teacher Education demonstrate a strong command of the field of English, the courses that will make your application most competitive are EGL courses. CEE 505, CEE 527, CEF 547, or LIN 544 may also be taken non-matriculated, but they will not enhance your application's competitiveness much, unless you already have a strong background in English. As you select EGL courses to take, be sure to consult the MAT Advising Worksheet to make sure your courses will count toward your degree if you are admitted. To take courses non-matriculated, you must fill out an application, available on-line (<http://www.stonybrook.edu/spd/current/forms.html>).

Unfortunately, graduate course offerings in English are extremely limited. As a result, you must get permission from the instructor to take a course non-matriculated. Contact the professor of the EGL graduate course you are interested in taking and explain that you are taking the course to prepare for applying to the MAT in English program. The professor may advise you to show up to the first class, where s/he will enroll as many non-matriculated students as possible in the course. Unfortunately, there is nothing the Director of English Teacher Education can do to help you if you find yourself unable to find an open seat in an EGL graduate course. While we would be delighted to offer more graduate courses, the resources for doing so are limited, and professors must keep student numbers in classes low enough to ensure an appropriate experience for those students already admitted to degree programs.

To register to take courses as a nonmatriculated student, follow the directions on the non-matriculated form at this website: <http://www.stonybrook.edu/spd/current/forms.html>

### **iii. What if I don't have a year of foreign language?**

NYS requires 1 year of foreign language at the college level for Teacher Certification. Stony Brook requires you to fulfill this requirement either before you apply or as you apply for the MAT. This requirement is not just a "hoop" to get through. Foreign language is especially important for English teachers as it

encourages them to see how language is linked to world-view and that multiple world views are an intellectual advantage for everyone.

Foreign language courses need not be taken at Stony Brook, nor must they be transferred to SBU for the MAT degree program. Any transcript showing a year of college-level foreign language will satisfy this requirement. If your undergraduate college allowed your high school foreign language to count as a year of college-level foreign language, have your undergraduate school's Registrar write a letter to that effect for you, and include the letter in your MAT application; such a letter will fulfill your foreign language requirement for the MAT.

**iv. Why must I take the GRE to apply for the MAT in English?**

The Graduate Record Exam scores serve two purposes: 1) they give us a standard measure by which to judge the relative likelihood of success of applicants to our program; 2) they give us a standard measure by which to judge our applicants (and those we admit) relative to those in other teacher certification programs at SBU and elsewhere. GRE scores are one way we answer calls for "teacher accountability." The GRE Specialty Subject Exam is not required.

**v. From whom should I get Letters of Recommendation?**

Letters of Recommendation are a very important part of your application. We want to know that you have the academic ability to succeed in our rigorous graduate English program and that you have the personal determination and discipline to do so. The most helpful letters will come from English Professors from whom you've taken at least one class. Letters from Stony Brook Professors are especially strong. Letters from non-English Professors are also helpful. You might choose to include one letter from a non-professor in authority who has seen you work effectively with adolescents. In general, letters from employers who are not educators and are not familiar with your work with adolescents are unhelpful.

**vi. What is the Admissions Committee looking for from the Personal Statement on the application?**

The personal statement is an important part of your application. We want to know that you are knowledgeable in English and that you have the temperament, discipline, and enthusiasm to be an effective English teacher for adolescents. We want to see that you have the command of written English necessary to be an effective teacher of

writing. There are many successful ways to approach the personal essay, so there is no one model or structure we expect you to follow. We also want to see that you have the required research and reading comprehension skills necessary for effective English teaching; thus, we have crafted an Admissions Essay Prompt that requires web research and reading. As you answer the prompt, try writing an interesting essay about yourself that addresses our concerns, that answers the prompt, and that stands out from the rest of the applicants' essays. We highly encourage you to get feedback on your essay from people you respect, and that you use their feedback wisely to revise your essay until it is a piece of writing you are very proud of. While our first concern is the content of your essay, we also highly recommend you proofread the essay carefully. Every semester applicants are rejected from our program because their essay has not been carefully proofread. The Program Director dislikes passing on this bad news. Please help him avoid having to do so in your case.

**vii. I'm concerned that I won't have a very competitive application for the program. What can I do to improve my chances of being admitted?**

Our program is very competitive, and thus only the strongest applicants are admitted. If you're concerned about your ability to compete for a seat in the program, you should do your best to write an effective Personal Statement and get letters of recommendation from persuasive writers. See the answers above to questions about the Personal Statement and Letters of Recommendation. The best way to enhance your application is to take one or two EGL graduate courses as a non-matriculated student and to request letters of recommendation from the professor. If you can do well on at least two EGL graduate courses, that is a good indication that you can succeed in our program and it may help you compete better with other applicants to the program. See also the answer above to the question "Should I take courses as a non-matriculated student before applying?" To take courses non-matriculated, see the School of Professional Development website.

**2. Questions about the BA in English Teacher Education**

**i. When and how should I apply for the BA in English Teacher Education?**

Application to the English Teacher Education Program is competitive. English Teacher Education Program Applications are



due either March 15<sup>th</sup> or November 15<sup>th</sup> of the semester previous to your desired first semester in the program. You should apply either in the last semester of your sophomore year or the first semester of your junior year. The application requires a 2-3 page essay and a copy of your unofficial transcript. While taking most English Teacher Education courses requires admission to the program, you may take PSY 327, SSE 350, CEF 347, and LIN 344 at any time. The Application for the Undergraduate English Teacher Education Program is available on the English Department website (click the link for “Teacher Education”): <http://www.stonybrook.edu/english/>.

**ii. I’m a senior English major, and I’ve decided I want to be a secondary English teacher. What are my options?**

Earning English Teacher Certification requires at least 3 semesters after you apply to the program; thus, if you apply for the program while you are a first semester senior, you will need to delay your graduation by a full year in order to earn English Teacher Certification. Rather than do so, it is far more advisable for you to graduate with a BA in English and apply for our MAT in English to begin the semester after you graduate. The MAT would require only one or two more semesters than delaying your undergraduate graduation would, and when you are finished, you would have both English Teacher Certification and a master’s degree. It is important to keep in mind, however, that admission to the MAT may be more competitive than admission to the BA Program.

**iii. Why must I meet with my English Major Advisor and the English Teacher Education Advisor every semester?**

The philosophy of teacher education at Stony Brook University is that you are a student in a discipline (in this case, English) as well as a teacher education student. Since you require both programs, you also require two advisors. Because earning Teacher Certification is a rigorous process with many requirements and very little room for error, we require you to meet with both advisors once each semester. Students who do not meet with both advisors at least once per semester frequently find errors in their programs when they apply for student teaching or attempt to graduate. Don’t be among them. See your advisors once each semester to plan your schedule of classes.

***Questions About the Program***

**1. Questions specific to the MAT Program**

**i. Why must my content courses be EGL courses? The Schedule of Classes lists many courses with CE\_ designations that seem like they should count for the MAT. Why don't they count?**

Since 2004, our MAT Program has been accredited by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). Only EGL courses, which are housed in, taught by, and responsible to the Department of English were accredited by NCTE for our program. In rare cases—for example, when no EGL course to satisfy the requirement is offered—CE\_ courses may be used for MAT content requirements, but this may be done **only with the prior approval of the Director of English Teacher Education**. The only exception to this rule is CEJ 552: Adolescent Literature, which was specifically created for our MAT program and was approved by NCTE.

**2. Questions relevant to both the MAT and BA Programs**

**i. Why do Stony Brook's teacher certification programs require so much more than minimum State Education Department requirements and programs at other colleges?**

Stony Brook University has created a distinctive Teacher Education Program that we believe produces very capable teachers for children and young adults. We believe middle and high school English teachers must have all the skills, knowledge, and abilities of non-teaching English majors and they must develop excellent knowledge, skills, abilities, and dispositions for teaching English. There is no more important job on the planet than teaching young people how to be effective, literate, critical-thinking members of their families, their communities, nation, and the world. We will support those we admit as they develop the skills necessary to take on the challenges of the teaching profession, but our program requires a strong work ethic, maturity, motivation, and a positive attitude. A good sense of humor, a thick skin, and a spirit of play also help!

**ii. Why do we work with so many sets of Standards in this program?**

Professionals don't go to their office, shut their door, and work alone. They are members of larger professional organizations and they are also employees of public or private organizations. When teachers teach, they teach as employees of a district and a state, and as professionals in a discipline. Teachers are decision makers, but they do not make their decisions in isolation. Professional educational organizations of several types produce sets of standards that serve as guides (not necessarily rules) for teachers. In our English teacher education program, we use standards for teaching

English produced by the National Council of Teachers of English and standards produced by the New York State Education Department (NYSED). We use standards for Teacher Candidate Dispositions produced by the NCTE, another national, interdisciplinary organization (InTASC), and another set by the New York State Education Department. We have also produced our own set of standards for Stony Brook teacher candidates: PEP Teacher Candidate Proficiencies. All these standards are published principles by which we make responsible educational decisions and judge our effectiveness. We do our best to help our teacher candidates use these standards to improve their practice without allowing them to drive them insane. Our methods, adolescent literature, and writing course curricula are also aligned with the New York State Common Core Standards.

**iii. What are NCTE content area requirements, and how do I fulfill them?**

Our English Teacher Education Program is accredited by the National Council of Teachers of English, the largest and oldest professional organization of K-College English educators in the nation (founded in 1912). In order to be accredited, we had to ensure that our teacher candidates would graduate with a broad knowledge of English content. If you were planning to go into advertising, communications, or college teaching, a more specialized content background in English might be appropriate; however, secondary teachers need a broader, generalist knowledge base. To ensure our graduates have gained this generalist knowledge, we require NCTE content area requirements, which are found on Part II of the MAT and the BA Advising Sheets. Before graduation from our program, students must have fulfilled each of the areas listed with at least one college course, either at the graduate or undergraduate levels. If your transcript (from any accredited college) has a course that obviously fits the area, you have already fulfilled the area. You want to be careful that as you select courses to take as part of your degree program with us, you take courses that will also fulfill any remaining NCTE content area requirements. Courses that do not obviously fulfill the content area must be approved by the Director of English Teacher Education. In order for him to approve the course, you will need to present either the official course description or the course syllabus (or in some cases, both). If fulfilling the content area requirement means you will have to take more than the minimum number of credits for the degree, so be it. It is possible to fulfill content area requirements using content from several courses, as

long as the total amount of work in the content area is equivalent to a full course.

**iv. What are Teacher Candidate Dispositions?**

Dispositions are attitudes that guide professional behaviors. In order to be effective, ethical educators, teachers must hold positive beliefs regarding young people, their discipline, their work, and the communities they serve. As you think about attitudes of effective teachers, think of some questions, such as: Can a teacher express racist attitudes and be effective and ethical in the classroom? Can a teacher ignore students' home lives and be an effective teacher? Can an English teacher be more effective trying to solve all problems alone or by asking other teachers for help? Can a teacher teach effectively without acting in ways that demonstrate that all students are capable of learning? These questions have pretty clear answers, but many ethical and professional questions do not have such clear answers; thus, the development of teacher candidate dispositions is an important part of our programs. To guide our discussions of teacher candidate dispositions—and to help us assess our students' professional behaviors and awareness of professional dispositions—we make use of several sets of standards: the National Council of Teachers of English "Attitudes of Effective English Teachers," the New York State Code of Ethics for Educators, and the InTASC Standards.

**v. Why can't I take the two Methods courses (EGL 441 & EGL 440 or CEE 588 & CEE 593) during the same semester?**

These courses are developmental. What you learn in Methods I (EGL 441 or CEE 588) is necessary in order for you to succeed in Methods II (EGL 440 or CEE 593). At the beginning of the program, you may feel frustrated that you must take an additional semester before being approved for student teaching. But by the time they student teach, our students come to appreciate the additional semester's preparation. As a result, they are more likely to succeed in student teaching, find satisfactory employment, and earn tenure—and actually help their students learn effectively.

**vi. What State Exams must I take to be an English teacher, and when should I take them?**

You must take 3 NYS standardized teacher certification exams (ALST, CST, and EAS) and submit a standardized portfolio for assessment (the edTPA). You must pass the CST (Content Specialty test) in order to be approved for student teaching; since it takes weeks before scores are reported to us, you should take the CST

during the semester you take Methods I. We suggest you take the ALST and CST during the semester you take Methods I and that you take the EAS during the semester you take Methods II or student teach. The edTPA is completed during the student teaching semester. For more information regarding the exams, see the following website: <http://www.nystce.nesinc.com/>

**vii. Why must I be fingerprinted?**

New York State requires fingerprinting (and a criminal background check) for teacher certification. In addition, many school districts require teacher candidates to be fingerprinted in order to complete field experience hours.

**viii. What courses are available in the summer?**

We cannot guarantee that any courses are available in the summer; however, the following courses have been offered fairly regularly in past summers: CEE 505, PSY 595, SSE 350, PSY 327, and LIN 344. Many undergraduate EGL courses are offered, but graduate offerings in EGL are scarce. Methods Courses and Student Teaching are never available in the summer.

**ix. Questions about Field Experience**

**1. How do I arrange for field experience?**

New York State requires teacher candidates to earn 100 hours of field experience working with adolescents in school settings before they are eligible for certification. Stony Brook teacher candidates earn all their field experience hours as part of the Methods coursework. Teacher candidates taking Methods classes are encouraged to approach schools on their own to arrange for field experience (it's good practice for getting a teaching job later). Letters of Introduction are available from your Methods professor and from the English Teacher Education Program Blackboard site (open only to students currently in the program). In Methods classes, teacher candidates will write analytical journals and blogs about their field experiences. Of the 100 hours, SUNY targets that at least 40 hours to be undertaken at *high needs schools*, and New York State requires that at least 15 hours take place in *special education settings* (including inclusion classes). A list of high needs schools is available on the Program Blackboard site.

**x. Questions about Student Teaching**

### **1. What is student teaching?**

Student teaching is a 75-day internship experience in which teacher candidates work with a secondary teacher (called a “Cooperating Teacher”) in his or her classroom with his or her students. Student teachers must intern at two class levels during their 75 days: grades 7-9 and grades 10-12. Student teaching occurs in the final semester of the program, and teacher candidates must be finished with all other coursework before they begin student teaching. Students must apply for student teaching.

### **2. Why must I apply to student teach? Isn't it my right to student teach once I've been admitted to the program?**

It is no one's *right* to student teach. Admission to the program and completion of all coursework in good standing earns you the right to *apply* for student teaching. As a student teacher, you will work directly with children and young adults as a representative of Stony Brook University. We take this responsibility extremely seriously, and thus we will approve only those teacher candidates who exhibit the appropriate knowledge, skills, and dispositions. The vast majority of student teachers applicants are approved for student teaching. Others are delayed by a semester or more for various reasons: they have additional requirements to make up; they must take additional coursework to bring their gpa up to the necessary level (3.0)—this minimum will likely raise soon; or, they are assigned remedial tasks to address deficiencies in their application. Still others are denied the ability to student teach based on very serious concerns regarding their ability to succeed in the classroom. Once we approve student teachers, they must also be approved by the secondary schools in which they will student teach. Decisions regarding student teaching are made by the English Teacher Education Review Committee (a committee of English and English Teacher Education faculty). There is a formal Appeals Process in place for Teacher Candidates who believe they have been treated unfairly. That process is shared with students upon admission to the English Teacher Preparation Program, and may be found in the Program Introduction Memo (available to admitted students).

### **3. I only have one more course to take. Can't I take it while I'm student teaching?**

No. Student teaching is all-consuming of your time and energy. It is a disservice to you and—more importantly—to your secondary students for you to take courses while you are student teaching. For this reason, it is crucial that you work closely with your advisors to ensure all your coursework is completed and your passing CST score is submitted by the time you apply to student teach.

#### **4. Where will I student teach? Will I get to choose?**

We place student teachers in schools with which we have formal arrangements and where we can be sure our teacher candidates will be given a professional and fulfilling experience. You are encouraged to request particular schools and geographic locations in your student teaching application, and we try our best to meet these requests, but we cannot guarantee them. It is entirely up to schools whether or not they take student teachers. All we can do is ask. If they say no, we have no further recourse. (This is another reason why we will approve only those most capable and professional for student teaching. One poorly-performing student teacher can close a school's doors to us for years.)

#### **5. Why can't I student teach at a school I attended?**

To ensure that you will have a professional experience and that you will be assessed appropriately, we do not allow student teachers to student teach in schools they have attended as students. It's important for you to feel like a real teacher (not a student), and that is very difficult to do in a school in which you were a student and with your own former teachers. It is also a benefit to you to get experience in other schools. Diverse experience is a marketable skill for English teachers. We also do not allow students to student teach in districts in which their family members are employed in order to avoid potential problems with assessment and chain of command. See the program director if you have additional questions about this.

#### **6. Can I student teach in New York City?**

Yes! In cooperation with an excellent program, the SUNY Urban Teacher Education Program (SUTEC), our students may student teach in New York City <http://www.suny.edu/sutec/>. We also offer a NYC section of the Student Teaching Seminar.

Many of our students have gone through this program in the past and all who have done so have been pleased with the experience. Interested students are encouraged to contact SUTEC through the Director of the English Teacher Education Program. We will be happy to put you in touch with student teachers who have gone through the SUTEC program. The availability of student teaching in NYC is dependent upon enough interest among our students. In the past ten years, we have been able to offer this program for all but one semester.

### **7. Why must I student teach at two grade levels?**

The New York State Department of Education requires that student teachers experience teaching at grades 7-9 and grades 10-12 in order to ensure that student teachers experience the differences between those two instructional settings. This split placement means additional challenges, but making sure you experience both levels is worth dealing with the administrative details. Many teacher candidates expect to prefer teaching high school, and fully half of them find after student teaching that they prefer teaching middle school. Look at the split placement as a chance to see where you feel more comfortable and effective.

### **8. Why must I student teach for 75 days, when the State Education Department only requires 40 days?**

40 days is the minimum standard for student teaching that NYS will accept. Stony Brook University is not interested in achieving only the minimum standard. Instead, we have developed a program that in many ways exceeds state minimum standards and that we believe produces excellent teachers for the schools and students we serve. It is more costly for the University for us to hold ourselves to these higher standards, and they require more effort from our teacher candidates and English Teacher Education faculty. The children and young adults we ultimately serve are worth it.

### **9. Can I keep my paid job while I'm student teaching?**

You'll wish you hadn't. Ask anyone who has successfully student taught and he or she will tell you that student teaching is thoroughly exhausting and completely consuming of your time. In the strongest terms possible we encourage our teacher candidates to save money, take loans, and otherwise arrange things so that they can student teach without attempting to hold



a paid job. In most cases in which student teachers have not been successful, we have found they attempted to hold a paid job in addition to student teaching. You have worked too hard and for too long to risk messing up your student teaching. Take the measures necessary to make student teaching your sole occupation for 75 days.

**10. Can I be paid for student teaching and field experience work?**

Unfortunately, no. In both student teaching and field experience, you are expected to be *supervised*, which means an employee paid by the school district must be directly responsible for you and for your work. If there is not a paid supervisor responsible for you, then you are not in a supervised situation; thus, the experience cannot count as supervised. Until school districts are willing to pay extra money for the services of student teachers and field experience students, you may not be paid for performing those services. Instead, you should consider your time well compensated by the directly employable-skills and professional connections you build in field experience and student teaching.

**11. If I am student teaching and my Cooperating Teacher is going to be absent, may I serve as the paid substitute teacher for the day?**

No. See above. This can be frustrating—indeed, years ago the current Director of English Teacher Education was a student teacher, sweating tirelessly to educate America’s youth, as a paid substitute teacher sat in the back of the room for several days, knitting. If you find yourself in this situation, consider asking the substitute teacher to help you by offering you a unique perspective and critical examination of your skills. Be paid in professional advice and experience instead of money.

***Questions About the Profession of English Teaching***

**1. Am I likely to get a job once I graduate?**

English teachers are not exactly in tremendous demand in high-paying, suburban districts. The state of the national economy has put additional burdens on school district budgets. But the situation is far from dismal. Every year, some graduates find employment as tenure-track English teachers on Long Island, and many others find such employment after a year or two of substitute teaching—most as long-term subs (who teach the same class for a period of time, for example as the regular teacher is on maternity or paternity leave or sick leave). Teachers are

always needed in New York City and other urban areas, and while they tend to pay less than suburban districts, teaching in NYC is far more positive, safe, and affirming than most people think. You should be open to teaching there. Also, other urban areas throughout NYS and the country are in great need of English teachers. If you are willing or interested in moving, employment opportunities for English teachers increase dramatically. Also, see above for the answer to “Can I teach in other states if I earn NYS teacher certification?”

## **2. What can I do to make myself more attractive to schools looking for an English teacher?**

The more experience you have actually working with adolescents in educational settings, the better. Consider non-school settings, such as commercial tutoring agencies, summer camps, not-for-profit organizations (such as museums, community literacy programs, volunteer organizations). Be sure to gain diverse experience in the schools you select for field experience. You might also consider trying to publish in a local newspaper or journal for English teachers (*The English Record* (New York State English Council)

<http://www.nysecteach.org/englishrecord> and *English Journal* (National Council of Teachers of English) < <http://www.ncte.org/journals/ej> > are good choices).

You might also consider adding additional skills that would be of interest to school districts: get experience that would help you serve as faculty advisor for a student club, newspaper, literary magazine, or yearbook. You might also consider gaining experience that would allow you to coach a sport. In addition, consider gaining expertise in high needs content areas, such as TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), reading instruction, and special education. As part of the Student Teaching Seminar, you will learn how to write an effective resume and cover letter. We also help our teacher candidates practice for interviews, so they can be sure to interview to their best advantage.

## **3. How can I find out more about the faculty who will be teaching me?**

Stony Brook has assembled a talented and experienced faculty in English and Teacher Education. To find out more about our faculty, see the Professional Education Program Faculty Directory <http://stonybrook.edu/pep/table.shtml> (click on faculty members’ names to see their biography) and see the English Department Faculty page:

<http://www.stonybrook.edu/commcms/english/people/faculty/faculty.html>.

## **4. Where can I get more information about Teacher Education at Stony Brook University?**

See the Professional Education Program Website [www.pep.sunysb.edu](http://www.pep.sunysb.edu) for more information. In particular, see the *PEP Guide to Teacher Education*

<http://stonybrook.edu/pep/guide/>, which is a 100-page document that describes our philosophy, structure, and policies. Those interested in the MAT Program

should also see the SPD Student Handbook, available at the following website:  
<http://ws.cc.stonybrook.edu/spd/current/index.html>.

**5. It sure takes a lot of work to become an English teacher. Is it really worth it?**

There is no more important work on the planet than helping young people develop into literate, critical citizens. There is no more satisfying feeling than watching a young person realize his or her potential and knowing you were a part of it. Teachers do get a lot of public attention and not all of it is positive, but no one questions the importance of English teachers. It is nice to be wanted and needed. No English teacher goes to sleep at night wondering if he or she is helping make the world a better place. Our work can make a tremendous difference in one student's whole life and in the life of a community. It's hard not to get emotional when you think about what an English teacher can realize in helping students learn to use language to change the world for the better. As Henry James said, teachers never know how far their influence goes. Sure, it's an awesome responsibility to be a teacher, and so it is an awesome amount of work to become a good teacher. But is it worth it? Absolutely!