

# VSU Clinical Practice Guidelines

## Information, Schedule, and Evaluations

Welcome to clinical practice! You have entered the most rewarding, challenging and important semester yet! Educators are miracle workers and accept all children from every walk of life! They care for them, nurture them and teach them daily and you are to be commended for choosing such a noble profession! Best of luck as you begin your final journey to becoming a miracle worker!

This packet provides general information regarding the expectations of the clinical practice experience. It includes information on professionalism, attendance policies, lesson plan expectations, solo teaching schedule, evaluation, confidentiality, and forms which must be submitted. Your department will provide more specific expectations.

### Professionalism

“The Code of Ethics for Educators defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission has adopted standards that represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction and provides guidance for protecting the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, and assuring the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession.” (*The Code of Ethics for Educators*, October 15, 2019).

**Standard 9: Professional Conduct** – “An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to any conduct that impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder’s ability to function professionally in his or her employment position, or behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students.” (*The Code of Ethics for Educators*, October 15, 2019).

This code must be followed. **Any violation of state or federal law and violation of this code of ethics must be reported to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and will lead to the removal of a student teacher or intern from the clinical practice placement.**

### Valdosta State University’s Student Code of Conduct

All students of Valdosta State University are held to the student code of conduct. See the following link to access the student handbook for specifics.

<https://www.valdosta.edu/administration/student-affairs/student-conduct-office/student-code-of-conduct.pdf>

### When Problems Develop

Clinical Practice is a developmental process. Because of this element, challenges will sometimes present themselves in the form of a concern. If concerns do surface, how is the candidate informed? There is a good possibility that self-recognition is sufficient. However, if this does not happen, the mentor is often the first line of communication to share that information. The university supervisor is also a participant. Often, the communication is presented in a conference setting in which written documentation supports the oral exchange of ideas on the area(s) of concern. However, when the problem becomes consistent over a period of time, or when a significant concern is evident, written documentation is an important feature. The protocol for this type of documentation is the completion of a Professional Improvement Plan by the specific department.

### Social Network Sites

Participation in clinical practice is a privilege and carries with it professional responsibilities. As a

future professional educator, you are expected to maintain high standards of personal and professional ethics at all times and in all settings. Social networking sites such as, Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, etc., should represent your high personal and professional standards. If you have postings on any of these sites, you must remember that they are public and may be viewed by school personnel and students. If school personnel find your postings unprofessional they can request your removal from their school and may file a complaint with the PSC. This request will be honored immediately and a new clinical practice placement will not be identified until the following semester. **Additionally, do not post any P-12 students' pictures on the Internet.**

Your professionalism during the clinical practice experience is critical as evidenced by the fact that most unsatisfactory clinical practice experiences are the result of unprofessional behaviors. Some of these unprofessional behaviors are based on inappropriate relationships with students. Additionally, please remember that you are a guest in the school in which you are completing your clinical practice experience. You are a representative of Valdosta State University, the Dewar College of Education and Human Services, and your department at the school site. You are placed as a student; please be cognizant of that role. Any concerns regarding interactions with or behaviors of your mentor teacher should be discussed through the appropriate VSU channels. Any candidate who independently meets with a school administrator without prior consent of his/her supervisor or department head will not successfully complete clinical practice.

### **Attendance and Schedule**

If you must be absent for an emergency or illness, notify your public school mentor as soon as possible **via the telephone**. However, if your mentor prefers other means of notification, follow the protocol for notifying him/her. Be sure to also contact your university supervisor to confirm the absence. If you cannot reach your mentor via the telephone, call your school's main office as early as possible in the morning. For example, if you are ill in the evening, you should call the mentor then, so that he/she will be prepared for your absence! Make sure that you have written down your mentor's contact number and the school's contact number and have these numbers with you at all times.

Appointments and other business matters should be scheduled outside of the school day. Candidates are expected to adhere to the mentor's schedule including before and after school duties, club meetings, parent conferences (if appropriate), PTO meetings, or other activities. **Candidates follow the safety/health protocol and schedule of the school to which they are assigned. You observe all breaks/holidays, etc., with your assigned school--NOT with VSU.**

While it is anticipated that candidates who are placed in a school setting full time will complete a **minimum** of 600 hours and that candidates who are placed in a school setting for less than a full time experience will complete a **minimum** of 300 hours during this experience, please recognize that these are **minimum** expectations. You are preparing to be a professional; please do not view this requirement as "completing my hours." Every candidate is expected to attend school each day that school is in session (five days a week). The final day for clinical practice for ALL students is listed on the schedule page.

### **E-mail**

You will receive reminders, notices, and information from me throughout the semester via your VSU e-mail account. **It is imperative that you check your VSU e-mail account DAILY. If e-mails are not responded to within 48 hours, a professional development plan may be issued.**

### **Confidentiality**

During the clinical practice experience, you will have access to permanent records and other confidential information. The Georgia PSC Code of Ethics, Standard 7: Confidential Information,

states: “An educator shall comply with state and federal laws and state school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material and other information. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. sharing of confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status and/or income, and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law;
2. sharing of confidential information restricted by state or federal law;
3. violation of confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items, etc.; and
4. violation of other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.” (*The Code of Ethics for Educators*, October 15, 2019)

You are expected to keep student records and school system information confidential.

### **Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory Clinical Practice**

As you are probably aware, clinical practice/seminar is graded on an “S” (satisfactory) or a “U” (unsatisfactory) basis. The clinical practice experience is challenging and a time of great growth but, unfortunately, not all experiences are successful. Students often ask how it is possible to “fail” clinical practice. The following list, while by no means complete, is how it can happen: inappropriate interaction with students, lack of command of content knowledge, failure to plan, frequent tardiness, frequent absences, lack of professional behavior, etc. If your ongoing performance during the clinical practice experience is not satisfactory, then the VSU supervisor and mentor will provide specific suggestions to guide your improvement efforts. Identified deficiencies or areas needing improvement must be corrected in order to achieve the grade of “Satisfactory.”

Please keep in mind, however, that clinical practice is still a learning process. The College of Education and Human Services does not place you in clinical practice expecting you to be a “perfect” educator. We do, however, expect to see you grow and learn during clinical practice. We do expect to see you **behave in a professional, responsible manner at all times** that reflects positively on VSU, on the College of Education and Human Services, on your department, and on yourself.

At the beginning of your clinical practice experience, you should take advantage of the expertise of your mentor and university supervisor and ask them any questions you may have. Candidates should expect to receive a higher level of support from their mentors at the beginning of the semester; this support should fade as the candidate demonstrates increased skill in planning instruction, delivering instruction, and assessing student learning. A grade of “Satisfactory” means that we are willing to guarantee your future employer that you have demonstrated appropriate content knowledge as well as appropriate skills in independent planning, teaching, and assessment.

Please feel free to call me or e-mail me with any questions or concerns you may have during the clinical practice experience. Please contact me through e-mail (**Mrs. Renee Whitmer, e-mail: [brwhitmer@valdosta.edu](mailto:brwhitmer@valdosta.edu) or 229-249-2786**). The Office of Professional Education Services is located in the Dewar College of Education and Human Services Building, Room 2030.

Each fall and spring semester there is Career Day scheduled for potential employers to come to the VSU campus and interview our students for employment. In the past, we have had 40 or more employers come to recruit you for their schools. The career day date is included in the clinical practice schedule, and **all candidates are expected to participate in this activity. This is a mandatory session for all candidates. Please make sure your mentor teacher is aware of this date.**

## Grievances

The College of Education and Human Services and the partner school agree that any situation in which the candidate has a concern that he or she would like to formally pursue, the candidate should follow the following protocol: (1) Mentor Teacher, (2) University Supervisor, (3) Department Head, (4) Dean.

## Certification, MyPSC, Verify Program Enrollment

Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) requires all educators to register at [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com). Click on **Register MyPSC** and follow the instructions. If you have problems registering, please send an email to [mail@gapsc.com](mailto:mail@gapsc.com) or contact the GaPSC Call Center, which is open from 7:00 am to 4:30 pm, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday except for state holidays, at (800) 869-7775. **All candidates MUST verify enrollment in their program through the Programs tab of their MyPSC account.** Candidates in teaching fields will verify enrollment in their programs prior to applying for the Pre-Service certificate at the time of admission. **CSD majors must verify enrollment prior to completing clinical practice (Internship).** The final paperwork you have to complete for getting your certificate is the Verification of Lawful Presence (VLP) forms and the GaPSC Certification Application. The VLP forms contain specific instructions for completion and must be notarized and submitted to Mrs. Renee Whitmer by the end of your clinical practice semester. Pages 1 & 2 of the Certification Application will be completed at the Clinical Practice Orientation meeting and page 3 will be completed at the Clinical Practice Exit meeting (see Schedule). The Certification Office sends your application, along with the GaPSC Approved Program Completion Form and an official transcript, to GaPSC to request that your certificate be issued to you. Before these forms can be submitted to GaPSC, the following **MUST** be completed:

- (1) your final grades [showing successful completion of clinical practice] must be posted on your transcript,
- (2) a final overall GPA that meets the minimum required for your program is noted on your transcript,
- (3) your degree is conferred and is posted on your official transcript,
- (4) if you took Praxis II, submission of a copy of your Praxis II scores [all pages] to Mrs. Renee Whitmer (FAX 229-333-5360),
- (5) you have posted passing scores on the required content assessment(s) for your program, and
- (6) you have posted passing scores on the Ethics (test 360) assessment (initial teaching fields only).

Once your materials are sent to GaPSC, you may view correspondence from GaPSC regarding the status of your certificate processing and view/print your official certificate once issued using your **MyPSC** account. Please check the correspondence section of your MyPSC account regularly.

## Certification Processing Timeline

The Registrar's Office will begin auditing students' records once final grades are posted (typically by 9:00 a.m. on Monday after graduation) in Banner and conferring degrees accordingly. Please monitor Banner for your grades to post and for your degree to be conferred (a Degree Date will be listed once your degree is conferred). Providing that you have completed all program requirements and **do not have any holds** on your record for parking tickets, library fees, etc., your degree will be conferred and your official transcript will be sent to the Certification Office generally in about 2 to 3 weeks after graduation. Once the office receives your official transcript and verify that you have completed / submitted all certification requirements and documents, Mrs. Whitmer will complete the Approved Program Completion form and submit all required documents directly to GaPSC electronically.

**This process takes time – be patient! Please monitor your MyPSC account for correspondence from GaPSC regarding your certificate processing and to access / print your official certificate once issued. Please check your MyPSC account regularly for updates.**

## **Tiered Certification**

The information in this section was obtained from the GaPSC website. Complete information regarding Tiered Certification can be found on the GaPSC website at this

link: <http://www.gapsc.com/Certification/TieredCertification/tieredCertification.aspx>.

## **Induction Certificate**

### ***What You Need to Know Right Now...***

Upon completion of your teaching field program and meeting all certification requirements, including passing the appropriate content assessment(s) and the GACE Educator Ethics (test 360), you will be eligible for a 5-year Induction certificate (IST).

The 5-year Induction certificate is based on completion of a GaPSC-accepted educator preparation program and all applicable Special Georgia Requirements, including all required assessments. The Induction certificate period is designed to ensure that early career teachers are fully prepared for the profession while providing opportunities for professional growth. Induction teachers must meet additional qualifications, including 3 years of successful educator experience, as determined by GaPSC and your employing LUA, in order to qualify for a Professional certificate.

## **Standard Professional Certificate and Exit Assessments (Communication Disorders Only)**

Upon completion of your Communication Disorders program and meeting all certification requirements, including passing the Praxis II in Speech Language Pathology, you will be eligible for a level 5, Standard Professional Service certificate (SRS) in Speech Language Pathology (P-12). To expedite the processing of your certificate, be sure to include Valdosta State University as a recipient of your Praxis II score report.

NOTE: You do not have to pass Praxis II in order to complete clinical practice successfully and graduate, but you do have to provide documentation that you have attempted (resulting in an official score) the assessments. Candidates who do not meet these requirements will receive an Unsatisfactory (U) in clinical practice or internship for the semester and will not graduate.

GaPSC rules regarding certification are subject to change. You will be notified by my office of any substantive changes. All questions regarding certification may be directed to **Mrs. Renee Whitmer, COEHS Room 2037, 229-249-2786.**

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## **Teacher-Specific Tasks for Clinical Practice** **(Not Applicable to Communication Disorders Candidates)**

### **Lesson Plans**

The preparation and submission of lesson plans is an important responsibility for teacher candidates. The plans must be done in a format acceptable to the mentor teacher and submitted by the deadlines he/she establishes.

**If your plans are not submitted on time or are not of adequate quality, the mentor teacher should not allow you to teach those lessons; and he/she should notify your VSU supervisor. Failure to plan appropriately may well result in your removal from clinical practice and receiving an “unsatisfactory” grade.** Timely submission of the plans allows the mentor to not only review and



approve the plans but, more importantly, to offer suggestions to improve the lessons and your teaching.

## Teaching

Teacher candidates are expected to solo teach for at least three weeks, but most will do more than that. Each program specifies the minimum amount of time required for solo teaching; the three weeks is the college minimum requirement. The time and rate at which you assume teaching responsibilities depend on your performance and involvement early in the clinical practice experience. Co-Teaching is acceptable and encouraged throughout the entire semester. You need to become familiar with the curricular content and materials, the students, your mentor's classroom procedures, and much more.

**Look for opportunities to assist the teacher and to work with students early in the clinical practice experience to demonstrate your initiative and your ability to assume greater teaching responsibilities.** Solicit feedback from the mentor and VSU supervisor regarding your performance. Regularly reflect on your performance with the mentor teacher and ask for suggestions to improve. Teacher candidates who do not demonstrate skills required by the supervisor and/or mentor to allow the required amount of time for solo teaching prior to the end of the semester (including a gradual introduction and removal from teaching responsibilities) will receive a grade of "Unsatisfactory" for the clinical practice experience. **Remember, when you are applying for teaching positions later on, your mentor teacher will very likely be one of the references who will be contacted!**

## Evaluations/Assessments

During your clinical practice, you are required to complete three formative self-evaluations online. However, your university supervisor and/or mentor teacher may evaluate you multiple times to ensure your success. Plan to complete your initial formative self-evaluation on the first day or two after you begin assuming teaching responsibility for a class. Inform your mentor when you plan to do this so that he/she can observe the lesson and be prepared to listen/discuss your reflections. This evaluation and subsequent discussion with your mentor will identify strengths and areas that need improvement.

**Initial Formative Evaluation (CAPS/Intern Keys) - submit your self-evaluation by the due date listed on the schedule.**

**Mid Formative Evaluations (CAPS/Intern Keys and Professional Behaviors and Dispositions Assessment) - submit your self-evaluations by the due date listed on the schedule.**

**Final Formative Evaluation (CAPS/Intern Keys) - submit your self-evaluation by the due date listed on the schedule.**

**Summative Evaluation – after consulting with you and your mentor teacher, your university supervisor will submit the summative evaluation online at [teach.valdosta.edu](http://teach.valdosta.edu).**

Evaluations will be completed online at [teach.valdosta.edu](http://teach.valdosta.edu) and must be submitted by the dates shown on the schedule. These are "liberal" dates; that is, most of you should submit each evaluation well before the date shown. Directions for submitting evaluations are available at:

**<http://www.valdosta.edu/coe/teached/formativesummative-evaluation-information.php>**

Your VSU supervisor is expected to make a minimum of three visits during your clinical practice experience; occasionally one or more of these visits is completed through videoconference technology (e.g., the initial orientation visit and the final visit for the semester). Your teaching will be evaluated by your supervisor a minimum of three times using the same forms that you will use for self-evaluation. Secondary supervisors may observe and evaluate at any time during the semester for additional feedback. These visits are usually requested by the primary supervisor. Your school mentor teacher will

also evaluate you three times online at [teach.valdosta.edu](http://teach.valdosta.edu) using these forms. Some departments may use additional departmental evaluation forms. Questions about the evaluation system should be directed to Natalie Kuhlmann ([nmkuhlmann@valdosta.edu](mailto:nmkuhlmann@valdosta.edu); 229-253-2863).

The minimum performance level on the Summative Intern Keys/Candidate Assessment on Performance Standards (CAPS) is Level II; however, individual programs may choose to set higher minimum requirements for successful completion of clinical practice. These program requirements will be included in the course syllabus for clinical practice/internship for those individual programs. The minimum performance level on the Summative Professional Behaviors and Dispositions Assessment is “Meets Expectations” on each of the 14 indicators. Please consult with your university supervisor for questions or concerns about minimum performance requirements.

### **Other Forms/Evaluations and the CSPI Survey**

Near the end of the semester, all teacher candidates will receive several other forms which **MUST** be completed. These must be completed by **the date identified in the schedule provided**. These forms will be completed online at [teach.valdosta.edu](http://teach.valdosta.edu). The required forms are: Teacher Candidate Placement Form, Teacher Candidate Evaluation of the Mentor, Teacher Candidate Evaluation of the VSU Supervisor, and Survey for Program Improvement (SPI). You will complete this survey only **ONE** time per mentor, supervisor, or school placement. The teacher candidate is requested to describe his or her perceptions of the quality of supervision provided by the public school mentor teacher and the VSU supervisor during the clinical practice experience. This information is important to help improve the supervision process. Results of these evaluations are shared with your department head and supervisor only **AFTER** the clinical practice experience is completed. The SPI (Survey for Program Improvement) is designed to solicit your opinions about your preparation program and how well you believe that you have been prepared to teach.

**For all teacher candidates**, all of these additional forms will be available to you through [teach.valdosta.edu](http://teach.valdosta.edu) near the end of the semester.

**FAILURE TO COMPLETE ANY REQUIRED COEHS ASSESSMENTS OR FORMS WILL RESULT IN THE STUDENT RECEIVING AN “UNSATISFACTORY” IN CLINICAL PRACTICE FOR THE SEMESTER.**

### **Substitute Teaching**

Teacher candidates are **NOT** allowed to serve as substitute teachers during the semester they are enrolled in clinical practice.

### **GACE Content & Ethics (test 360) Assessment Requirements**

All teacher candidates must attempt (resulting in an official score) the appropriate GACE Content Assessment (with the exception of those teacher candidates in the middle grades/secondary MAT program) for their major and the GACE Educator Ethics (test 360) Assessment prior to the end of the semester in which they are enrolled in student teaching or internship. Faculty in your program must recommend that you be made eligible to take the GACE Content and Ethics (test 360) assessments, and the Dean’s Office staff must make you eligible before you will be able to register for them. After you have been made eligible, you will need to go the GaPSC website (<http://www.gapsc.com/>) and click on the link in the top right-hand corner titled “Login/Register to MyPSC” to register for or access your MyPSC account. Make sure that you select the following option as your reason for testing: 2. I am enrolled in or have completed a Georgia-approved program and have obtained eligibility from my program provider to take a content assessment and/or the Georgia Educator Ethics (test 360) assessment. Be sure to affiliate with or claim Valdosta State University as the institution at which you are receiving your preparation. After you have created your MyPSC account, you will need to go to the

GACE website ([www.gace.ets.org](http://www.gace.ets.org)) and setup a GACE account. You will register for the GACE content assessments through your GACE account. The scores for GACE tests are provided to Valdosta State University approximately one month after the test date. When registering for any test or assessment, make sure you choose the correct reason for testing; if an incorrect reason is selected, your test scores will not count.

Successful completion of the **Professional Learning Plan for Induction** is required for program completion. This assignment is listed in LiveText on the dashboard. Please see your department for more information.

NOTE: You do NOT have to pass the GACE Content Assessment or GACE Educator Ethics (test 360) in order to complete clinical practice successfully and graduate, but you do have to provide documentation that you have attempted (resulting in an official score) the assessments (GACE Content Assessment & GACE Ethics test 360) required for your major. Teacher candidates who do not meet these requirements will receive an Unsatisfactory (U) in clinical practice or internship for the semester and will not graduate. Do not EVER give anyone your official GACE score report; either FAX a copy or make a copy and mail it. Both of the GACE Content Assessment tests required for your major as well as the GACE Educator Ethics (test 360) must be passed before you can be recommended for certification. For most teacher candidates, the GACE Content Assessment consists of two tests. For candidates in Middle Grades Education, a content assessment consists of only one test. This means that Middle Grades Education candidates must pass the content assessment for both concentration areas before being recommended for certification.

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## Some Clinical Practice Dos and Don'ts

<b>Dos</b>	<b>Don'ts</b>
Show initiative – offer to help, get to know the students early in the semester	Text message when in classroom or in meetings
Turn off your cell phone in the classroom or in a meeting (in case of emergency situation, silence it)	Talk on your cell phone when in classroom or in meetings
Prepare in advance – lesson plans (if applicable) must be approved by your mentor before being taught	Fail to plan in advance or not have formal, written plans available when teaching
Prepare thoroughly – you should have command of the subject matter being taught	Teach erroneous content – you will be much less likely to do so if you prepare thoroughly and have extensive written plans to follow
Follow professional protocol – address issues through the appropriate chain of command.	Independently meet with a school administrator without prior consent of your supervisor or department head
Communicate appropriately and professionally (and often) with your mentor	Delete any VSU email (even if you don't recognize the name)
<b>Communicate appropriately (and positively) with your students</b>	<b>Forget to consider potential issues with FaceBook, Twitter, etc. accounts.</b>
Call the school/mentor if you must be absent	Fail to notify your mentor if absent
Email or call your supervisor if you must be absent	Fail to notify your VSU supervisor if absent
Follow school policies and Georgia code (law)	Have weapons (including knives with blades of 2") on school property
Have high expectations for your students (we have high expectations for you as well)	
Maintain confidentiality of student information	Disclose FERPA-protected student information
Work hard	Consider this the “downhill slide”
Enjoy and learn!	Forget to ask for support if needed, especially in the beginning of the semester

***\*It is the responsibility of each student to read this handbook in its entirety. This is the agreement between the instructor and the student; failure to read and understand this document is no excuse for failure to meet and/or complete the course requirements contained within. If you have any questions or if you do not understand any part of this document, contact the CEC Office at 229-333-7834.***

## Candidate Guidelines

### As the candidate, I have:

- \_\_\_\_ Attended candidate orientation; obtained candidate and mentor information packets.
- \_\_\_\_ Attended departmental orientation meeting; obtained information on seminars.
- \_\_\_\_ Given mentor his/her information packet.
- \_\_\_\_ Obtained mentor's phone number and school's phone number.
- \_\_\_\_ Solicited feedback from mentor for suggestions on how I can assist in the classroom.
- \_\_\_\_ Begun learning students' names and studying curriculum materials for mentor's class(es) in preparation for teaching responsibilities.
- \_\_\_\_ Prepared lessons for mentor as required--submitted on time and with high quality.
- \_\_\_\_ Solicited suggestions for improving planning, therapy, or teaching (as appropriate).
- \_\_\_\_ Completed the initial formative self-evaluation; shared results with mentor and VSU supervisor.
- \_\_\_\_ Revised lesson plans, content, and strategies to focus on areas targeted for improvement.
- \_\_\_\_ Scheduled the solo teaching period (if applicable) and discussed schedule/plans with VSU supervisor.
- \_\_\_\_ Midterm – Completed mid formative self-evaluation. Discussed progress with mentor and VSU supervisor; identified areas for further improvement.
- \_\_\_\_ Discussed activities to follow solo teaching (if applicable) with mentor and VSU supervisor.
- \_\_\_\_ Completed final formative self-evaluation (if applicable). Shared results with mentor and VSU supervisor--discussed the final grade.
- \_\_\_\_ Completed all exit evaluations/forms required from me.
- \_\_\_\_ Reminded my mentor to complete all of his/her online evaluations on me.
- \_\_\_\_ Completed pages 1 & 2 of the Certification Application.