

Frequently Asked Questions

Performance Assessments in Student Teaching: The Unit Plan and edTPA

What is edTPA?

edTPA is the Education Teacher Performance Assessment. It is now required that candidates in the state of Oregon complete this assessment in order to be licensed as a teacher. For all candidates, this portfolio assessment asks you to submit artifacts demonstrating your ability to plan, instruct, and assess students along with your explanations of those artifacts. Elementary candidates also complete a fourth section focused on mathematics instruction.

When will I complete edTPA?

You will complete sections of edTPA in your beginning placement (Fall semester) in order to learn about the actual assessment. Some of these sections are part of the Unit Plan you will complete during your beginning placement (described below). Others are course assignments. You will submit the complete edTPA assessment portfolio in your advanced placement (Spring semester).

Why is edTPA part of both student teaching and my courses?

The goal of having edTPA discussed in multiple settings is for you to learn about the kinds of thinking and writing that you will be required to do for edTPA. To help prepare you to complete edTPA successfully in the spring, you will work with your supervisor in the fall to practice the tasks required in the assessment. Your course instructors will be assisting you with edTPA tasks as well, in both fall and spring semesters.

In some cases, you will submit the same work to your supervisor and to a course instructor. In other cases, you may do edTPA practice as an assignment within a course. The goal is to make sure that you are receiving support in completing the Unit Plan (and simultaneously, getting ready to do edTPA!) from both your supervisor and your course instructors.

Remember, edTPA is just one way you demonstrate your evolving knowledge and skills. You are accomplishing much more in your student teaching than your Unit Plan or edTPA. Similarly, your courses are focused on broader goals related to your development as a teacher beyond how to complete edTPA.

Where do I go to get information about the required assessments that are part of my student teaching?

Go to www.education.up.edu, click on the “Program Handbooks & edTPA Resources” link on the left sidebar, and then login with your UP username and password. Or, [click here](#).

What handbooks do I need?

- **All candidates:** Download the *Clinical Practice Handbook* (in the first section on the site above) and the *Making Good Choices* document (in the third section on the site above).
- **Elementary candidates:** Download the *Elementary Education (Literacy and Math) edTPA Handbook* (in the fourth section on the site above).
- **Secondary candidates:** Download the edTPA handbook relevant to your subject area (in the fourth section on the site above).

➤ *Hint: Have the handbooks open and available as you review the rest of this FAQ!*

The Unit Plan

What is the Unit Plan and how does it relate to edTPA?

The Unit Plan includes 10 lesson plans, with assessments (formal and/or informal) for each lesson plan, and a pre/post assessment for the unit as a whole; 3-4 of the lessons and corresponding assessments are grouped under a central focus so that you can practice edTPA Tasks 1 and 3 (these tasks are described in your subject-specific edTPA handbook). See the example Unit Organizer in your *Clinical Practice Handbook* (p. 23).

Where can I find information about the requirements for the Unit Plan (Fall Semester, beginning placement)?

The Unit Plan is described on pages 21-27 of the *Clinical Practice Handbook*. You can also review the *Unit Plan At-A-Glance* document in the “Unit Plan Templates” section and the *Steps for Completing the Unit Plan* of the site above.

When can I begin teaching the Unit Plan? You must meet with your University Supervisor and Cooperating teacher to complete the *Authorization to Begin Teaching the Unit Plan* form. Your supervisor has this form.. Once the form has been completed, you can begin working on your unit planning. You will consult regularly with your Cooperating Teacher to be sure the lessons are appropriate, well-sequenced, and ready to be taught

If I am in an elementary placement, does my Unit Plan have to focus on literacy?

For the Unit Plan (in beginning placement/Fall semester), your unit could be interdisciplinary, or have lessons that are not literacy-focused, but the 3-4 lessons you are designating as the learning segment **must** have a central focus that involves creating or comprehending complex texts (See Rubric 1 in your edTPA handbook). You could address this focus in many subject areas, but the **literacy emphasis is mandated**. For example, you might be teaching a unit in math, but your central focus for the learning segment could be interpreting word problems. In a unit in social studies, you might be teaching about the Oregon Trail; a central focus could be asking students to write about reasons different groups were using the Trail.

What format should I use for my lesson plans?

For both the Unit Plan (beginning placement/Fall semester) and edTPA (advanced placement/ Spring semester), you will use the *Lesson Plan Template* described on page 24 of the *Clinical Practice Handbook*. The *Lesson Plan Template* is available on the Program Handbooks site (link above).

How do I choose the learning segment lessons in my Unit Plan?

Keep the following three key ideas in mind when designating 3-4 lessons from the Unit Plan as your learning segment:

1. The 3-4 lessons must be **consecutive**.
2. The lessons must all build toward one **central focus** that you identify on your *Unit Organizer*. Be sure to refer to Task One “What to Do” in your edTPA handbook, to help you understand what your central focus should emphasize.
3. You must have at least one assignment (edTPA calls these formal assessments) that students will complete at the end of the learning segment that you grade, give students feedback on, and use to evaluate how well the class did in relation to the central focus.

Is the post-test for my Unit Plan the same thing as the formal assessment for the learning segment?

Your post-test can be your formal assessment, but it doesn't have to be. If your learning segment is the last 3-4 lessons in the unit, it is possible that your post-test can be your formal assessment of the learning segment. The most important issue to consider when deciding whether the post-test is a strong assessment of the learning segment is how well the post-test evaluates the

central focus. (Your post-test is probably designed to assess goals in addition to your central focus). The alternative would be to have the pre/post-test for your unit be one assessment and have an assignment in your learning segment serve as the assessment of the central focus.

Who should I go to for help with my Unit Plan?

Your University Supervisor is your primary source of support for the Unit Plan as a whole - he or she will be evaluating your work at the end of the semester. Your CT will assist with lesson and assessment ideas. Course instructors are providing general information about how to complete the Unit Plan.

edTPA (in the Unit Plan and on its own)

Where can I find information about the requirements for the edTPA (Spring Semester, advanced placement)?

A completed edTPA and a Unit Level Assessment form are required in the advanced placement. The description of these requirements can be found on pages 27-28 of the *Clinical Practice Handbook*. Additional information and support will be offered during your student teaching seminar in the Spring semester.

What is a commentary?

edTPA asks that you submit evidence (artifacts) that show your teaching ability. You will submit lesson plans, teaching materials, assessments, video clips, examples of your students' work, and illustrations of the feedback you provided to students. These examples tell a great deal about you as a teacher, but the assessment also asks you *to explain* how the evidence you've created *actually demonstrates the criteria that edTPA is evaluating*. Your commentaries *comment on* the evidence you've collected and give you the chance to justify the teaching decisions you made. The templates that are provided for each task guide you through the questions that you need to write about to develop a complete commentary, and the rubrics identify the characteristics of strong commentaries.

How do I choose a central focus?

Start by reviewing your edTPA handbook—look especially at Rubrics 1-5. These rubrics will help you to determine that you are choosing an instructional focus that will align with the criteria emphasized by edTPA. Elementary teachers, for example, must focus on lessons that engage students in creating or comprehending complex texts. Each secondary edTPA handbook identifies an instructional emphasis for the subject area. Your central focus must be clearly aligned with that emphasis.

edTPA uses a lot of terms I don't understand! Where can I go for help?

Toward the end of your edTPA handbook (specific to your level and subject area), you will find a **glossary** that will define most of the terms that are used in edTPA.

If I am getting multiple endorsements, do I have to do an edTPA for every one of them?

No. Oregon legislation enforced by the Teachers Standards and Practice Commission requires candidates to complete just one edTPA. This edTPA assessment will be done in your advanced placement in the Spring semester.

Are there any edTPA examples I can see?

In this first year of implementation, we don't have a lot of examples. You might go to passedTPA.com to see the examples of Task 1 that are available for multiple subject areas. There is even a perfect example of a completed edTPA for secondary literacy. You may search online for other examples, but be careful! In most cases of examples online, you have no way of knowing whether this commentary scored well or poorly. Emulating a poor example might be

worse than having no example at all. Reading the edTPA handbook carefully and checking that your commentaries address the criteria described in the rubrics are sound practices.

How will my edTPA be scored in my advanced placement?

This year, 30-40% of all UP candidates' edTPA portfolios will be submitted for scoring by Pearson. All others will be scored internally by UP faculty and supervisors. You won't know until after you have submitted your portfolio whether you have been chosen to be among the lucky few sent to Pearson. For this reason, it is important that you do your best when completing your edTPA in your advanced placement. If your edTPA portfolio is selected for national scoring, your score will be sent by Pearson to you and to the edTPA coordinator at UP. The data from all candidates in Oregon will be used by TSPC to establish a passing score for the state. At the School of Education, we will review all candidates' scores to evaluate and improve our teacher preparation program.