

Questions and Answers

Q: My friends received emails from Marina McAdam about background checks and placements and I did not receive any emails. Why?

A: There is a good chance that Marina McAdam's emails go to your spam/junk mail box. It happened to about 99% of students who never received emails from Ms. McAdam. Please take into a habit to check your spam/junk mail box on a regular basis in order not to miss very important information.

Q: Why didn't I get my first/second choice of schools?

A: We place students by priorities. Students in their last semester at UofH have a priority (QUEST 3 or Student Teachers II). After we place them, we go to the students who are Student Teachers I, but decided to stay at the same school. After that we start placing the rest of the students. Some schools are in a very high demand. Each school can accept only a small amount of students. For example, a high demand elementary school in HISD can take only 10 students per semester. If we place six QUEST 3 students and four Student Teachers will stay at that school for the next semester, this leaves only 3 spots for the rest of the students. If there are 25 students who requested that school then, unfortunately, we can place only three, and the rest will be given their second or sometimes their third choice of schools.

Q: Can I contact the school's principal directly and ask to take me?

A: No, you cannot. UofH has certain procedures and contracts with districts and schools. We have to follow these procedures. All communication with districts and schools goes through Marina McAdam, field placement coordinator, or Dr. Thompson, our director. Only in certain cases it is allowed for students to contact schools directly. This has to be approved by either Marina McAdam or Dr. Thompson prior to the communication with the specific school.

Q: Can I contact the district Human Resources about my placement and ask when and where I will be placed?

A: No, you cannot. All communication with the district has to go through Marina McAdam, field placement coordinator. We have certain procedures to go through. District representatives get upset when our students contact them directly. We place about a thousand students on average per semester. Even if only 10% of our students email the district, it is a lot of work for the HR representatives to respond to each student. Marina McAdam, field experience coordinator, is always there for you in case you have any questions about your placement, coordinating teachers, timelines, background checks, etc. Please email her instead of the district. Her email is mvmcadam@uh.edu

Q: How long would it take to confirm that I am placed to a certain school?

A: Unfortunately, we do not have specific timelines for districts. Each district has their own way of conducting the background checks, contacting principals, and assigning teachers. You have to be patient. Usually, students will know their placements and teachers assigned about 2 weeks prior to the beginning of their field experience at schools.

Q: I submitted my background check a while ago. Why my placement has not been confirmed?

A: Most districts will not place students to schools unless their background checks are clear. We have to get all of the documentation ready for the districts to complete the background check process. Unfortunately, not all students submit their backgrounds in a timely manner. We have to wait for everyone to submit all of the documents and only then present them to the district. Be responsible! Submit everything you should in a timely manner. Placements of other students depend on you!

Also, some districts take quite a while to process backgrounds. It depends on how many students need to be processed. For example, last semester we had only 20 students being sent to a smaller ISD in Houston and about 300+ students to one of the biggest ISDs in Houston. As you can guess, the smaller ISD processed everyone fast, within two weeks, when the biggest ISD took about two months to process the backgrounds, just because of the amount of students they received. Unfortunately, we cannot control these processes.

Starting this semester HISD has switched to online background checks. This will help everyone. Now it will take you only minutes to complete your background check for HISD.

Q: Why some districts contact us directly for background checks? Why can't we just submit the background check forms to UofH?

A: Different districts have different policies in terms of background checks. Some of them are more complex and strict. In some cases, districts email students directly. We provide districts with your information such as names and emails. You may also need to travel to the district headquarters to be fingerprinted.

Q: When do we start our student teaching in the spring? When do we finish our student teaching?

A: The tentative date when students start their student teaching is January 8th, 2014. We ask our students not to make any plans a few days before that date, because we hold orientations a few days before the first day of student teaching. The tentative last day of student teaching is May 23rd, 2014.

Student Teaching 1 & 2 Field Experiences

Q: How would I know what is expected of me during my student teaching?

A: Prior to the beginning of student teaching we will hold an orientation for all of our students. At the orientation you will be given a lot of important information about your expectations, rules and procedures, time logs, supervisors assigned to you, etc. You will be sent an email with the date and time of the orientation.

Q: Which days of the week do we have to go to schools for student teaching?

A: In the spring semester our undergraduate Student Teachers will be receiving individual schedules of their student teaching days. Your individual schedule will depend on what type of a cohort you are in and some other details. The idea is that you will be student teaching for a week or two at a time at schools around Houston and then go back to classes at UofH for a week or two, then back to schools, and so on. The total amount of time spent at schools will equal to about 7 weeks per semester.

Graduate and post baccalaureate students may have different schedules for student teaching. We are working on the schedules right now and you will be contacted closer to January.

Q: When do we receive our individual schedules for student teaching?

A: We plan to give your schedules out at the orientation at Main campus prior to you starting the field experience. You will be receiving an email about the orientation in January.

Q: How many hours per day do we have to student teach for?

A: You will have to spend the whole school day while student teaching at schools. In order to find out when your assigned schools start the day and when they finish, you can check the school's website or simply call the school directly. Different schools have different schedules.

Q: Why do I have to go to an orientation done by the district? Is it different from the orientation that we will have at UofH in January?

A: Since you will have direct contact with school age children and will be student teaching, districts need to follow their policies and make sure you are familiar with the specific district procedures. A district orientation is different from the one offered at UofH. Students who got invited by the district to their orientation must be present as well as at the UofH orientation! If you do not show up at a district orientation, you may be rejected by the district.

Q: I requested a specific district, but now I am told that I cannot go to the district of my choice, because I didn't submit my background check. Why can't I submit it now and be sent to the district of my choice?

A: 90% of school districts we work with have recently implemented strict deadlines for background checks. They will not accept background check documentation past certain deadlines. If you missed the deadline, we have no choice, but to send you to a district that has a more flexible deadline. Make sure you check all emails from Marina McAdam, field placement coordinator, or Dr. Thompson, and submit everything in a timely manner.

Q: I submitted everything I had to. What's the next step?

A: All students will be contacted via email with their teacher assignments closer to January. You will know the school you are going to, the name of the teacher you will be working with, and the dates you will spend student teaching.