

ACT 91 Substitute Teaching for Student Teachers Policy

Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania

Portion of [Act 91](#) most relevant to this policy

Section 1219. Substitute Teaching Policy.--By February 15, 2022, each teacher preparation program approved by the department shall adopt a policy regarding allowing an individual undertaking a student teacher program under 22 Pa. Code § 354.25(f) (relating to preparation program curriculum) and satisfying the requirements of section 1201.1(1) to teach as a substitute in exchange for financial compensation, if the individual has received at least one satisfactory observation related to the individual's student teacher program. A teacher preparation program policy may not prohibit substitute teaching by individuals who have received at least one satisfactory observation related to their student teacher program.

Assumption

1. School districts and Slippery Rock University's teacher preparation programs desire to partner in good faith so that both the development of the student teacher is appropriately supported during the *student teaching* experience and the needs of the school district for substitute teachers can be partially alleviated with the use of qualified student teachers in their buildings.

Context

1. Student teachers are enrolled in an SRU credit bearing course called *student teaching* and are paying tuition for the experience of *student teaching* under the daily mentoring of a cooperating teacher and supervision by a university faculty member.
2. The Pennsylvania Department of Education provides minimum requirements for *student teaching*. These requirements must be met for an individual to be recommended for certification in Pennsylvania. A minimum of 12-weeks of supervised *student teaching* is required by PDE. SRU requires 16-weeks of *student teaching*.
3. Slippery Rock University has specific requirements for the awarding of a degree and the PDE-approved teacher preparation programs within the College of Education have additional requirements for students who are participating in *student teaching*.
4. Slippery Rock University is forever grateful to the school sites who host our student teachers.

Requests of the School District (School Site/Education Facility/Childcare Center)

1. School districts who wish to use an SRU student teacher as a substitute teacher should establish a process for providing the "locally issued permit", as described in the legislation, to the student teacher.
2. If student teachers are being considered for substitute teaching, the process for becoming an approved substitute teacher should be communicated to the student teacher directly.
3. School districts should give student teachers the opportunity to decline an offer to act as a substitute teacher on any given day, just like other substitute teachers.
4. School districts make efforts to inform building administrators that only approved student teachers are to be used as substitute teachers.
5. Building administrators adhere to this *Act 91 Substitute Teaching for Student Teachers Policy* provided by Slippery Rock University.
6. School districts may enact stricter guidelines for using student teachers as substitute teachers or choose not to use student teachers as substitute teachers.

Responsibilities of the University/University Supervisor Assigned to the Student Teacher

1. University supervisors will observe their SRU student teachers on a schedule determined collaboratively by the student teaching triad (student teacher, cooperating teacher and university supervisor).
2. University supervisors will use an abbreviated evaluation form, known as the SRU – 91, starting with the first formal observation of the student teacher.
3. Student teachers who receive a “basic +” rating on all components within *SRU Framework for Teaching* identified on the SRU – 91 will be identified as *Eligible for Substitute Teaching*.
4. The university supervisor and the student teacher will sign the SRU - 91 and a copy will be given to the student teacher and submitted to the student teaching office.
5. If the student teacher is deemed *Not Yet Eligible for Substitute Teaching*, the SRU - 91 will be used in subsequent observations until an evaluation of *Eligible for Substitute Teaching* is reached.
6. The Assistant to the Dean’s office will provide a “prospective teacher as a substitute teacher” letter directly to the student teacher when requested.

Responsibilities of the Student Teacher

1. Student teachers who desire to be considered for substitute teaching while student teaching will initiate the school district’s process for becoming an approved substitute teacher.
2. Student teachers will submit all required paperwork to the school district (or substitute teaching service) in order to become an approved substitute teacher.
3. Student teachers will submit the SRU – 91, that affirms their eligibility to substitute teach while student teaching, to the appropriate school official or substitute teaching service representative, if requested.
4. Student teachers who complete the appropriate steps to become an approved substitute teacher and receive an *Eligible to Substitute Teach* designation by their university supervisor on the SRU – 91 may accept substitute teaching opportunities under the conditions identified in Table 1.
5. Student teachers must notify their university supervisor as soon as possible about any substitute teaching assignments and keep a log of those assignments.

Table 1.

Substitute within their host teacher’s classroom.	Substitute within the same building* as their host teacher’s classroom, but not in their host teacher’s classroom.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ One day a week after satisfactory SRU – 91 form is submitted. ✓ For no more than 10 days total without approval from the Assistant to the Dean. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Only in emergency situations and only in the same content area as the student teacher is seeking.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Requests to substitute teach in the host teacher’s classroom beyond a single day in a week should be made with the Assistant to the Dean. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assistant to the Dean should be notified within 24 hours each time a student teacher substitutes outside of their host teacher’s classroom.
*Student teachers are not permitted to substitute teach outside of their assigned student teaching building.	
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Act 91 FAQs

FAQs

Q1: Does a student teacher have to act as a substitute teacher if asked by the host school?

A: No. A student teacher should not feel pressured to act as a substitute teacher before they feel they are ready. The student teacher, like any other substitute teacher, has the option to accept or decline an offer to substitute teach.

Q2: How does the evaluation on the SRU – 91 form affect the student teacher’s student teaching grade?

A: Since the SRU – 91 evaluation reflects 19 of the 22 components of the SRU Framework for Teaching, which is a large determinant of a student teacher’s final grade, and both are an evaluation of the student teacher’s progress toward becoming a certified teacher, there will be a relationship. However, the purpose of the SRU – 91 evaluation is solely to document the eligibility of student teacher to act as a substitute teacher after a single observation. A student teacher’s grade in student teaching reflects the entirety of the student teacher’s performance within the host teacher’s classroom throughout the semester as well as the student teacher’s completion of additional requirements as stated in the university supervisor’s syllabus.

Q3: If a student teacher is deemed eligible to substitute teach, does that mean that they will automatically pass student teaching?

A: No. As stated above, the evaluation of a student teacher on the SRU – 91 is based on one observation. A student teacher’s final grade is determined by the entirety of their work throughout the semester and many more factors are involved in determining a final grade.

Q4: Does the time a student teacher spend substitute teaching under Act 91 count as student teaching time?

A: No. When a student teacher is acting as a substitute teacher, they are a paid employee of the school district and not a student teacher. This is why student teachers are limited within the legislation as to the number of days they may act as a substitute teacher while student teaching.

Q5: Is substitute teaching and student teaching completely separate in the eyes of the university and the school district?

A: They are not completely separate in the eyes of the university. The student teacher, whether substitute teaching or student teaching, is still held to the highest professional standards. The PA Code of Conduct for Educators applies in both contexts. If the student teacher violates that code or has a lapse in professional judgement while “substitute teaching as a student teacher”, it will be addressed in the context of the student teaching semester.

Q6: Is the policy different for graduate student teachers or post baccalaureate student teachers than for undergraduate student teachers?

A: No. The policy applies to all SRU student teachers. However, the process for becoming an approved substitute teacher may be different. That process, again, must be determined by the school district.

Q7: Can a student teacher accept a substitute teaching position outside of the certification area they are seeking?

A: No. Student teachers are only to substitute teach in the same certification area as they are seeking.

Q8: Can a student teacher who has two different student teaching placements, return to their previous student teaching placement to substitute teach?

A: Possibly. This would be an example of a student teacher substitute teaching outside of their host teacher's classroom. This is permitted in emergency situations only and should be discussed with the triad and director of student teaching.

Q9: Can a student teacher be asked to “cover” a classroom for a brief period of time, in the absence of a certified teacher?

A: There is liability for the school district when the student teacher is not being supervised by a certified teacher but is “in charge” of students. It is understood that educators assist for the benefit of the learners when needed, and SRU would want our student teachers to be that type of educator. We also understand that there may be clear procedures at the district level for teachers “covering” other classrooms. This is where clear communication is crucial. We trust that school district leaders would be extremely cautious in using student teachers to “cover” classrooms in the absence of a certified teacher.

Q10: Can a university supervisor observe a student teacher while the student teacher is acting as a substitute teacher?

A: Possibly, but this is not recommended. There may be a time when a scheduled student teaching observation and a last-minute substitute teaching experience in the host teacher's classroom fall on the same day. If the university supervisor is unable to schedule another time to observe, they may choose to observe the student teacher.

Q11: The Act 91 Policy for SRU states that when exceptions are being made or when a student teacher is asked to substitute outside of their host teacher's classroom, the assistant to the dean should be notified. Who is to notify the assistant to the dean?

A: Any member of the triad (cooperating teacher, student teacher, university supervisor) or a representative of the school district can contact the assistant to the dean's office. The assistant to the dean's office will be acting as a central point of contact between the school district, the cooperating teacher, the student teacher, and the university supervisor. The assistant to the dean will ensure that the triad agrees with any exceptions and that the minimum days of student teaching required by PDE are being met. In an ideal situation, every member of the triad would be included in the communication. If all members of the triad are not included in the communication, the assistant to the dean will bring the others into the conversation before approving.

Evaluation of SRU Student Teacher for Substitute Teaching Eligibility

Student Teacher Name	Subject/Grade Level
School District	Date

Based on the SRU Framework for Teaching descriptors, the student teacher identified above has the following ratings.

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation			Domain 2: The Classroom Environment		
	Rating (Check One)			Rating (Check One)	
	Unsatisfactory or Not Observed	Basic +		Unsatisfactory or Not Observed	Basic +
1a: Demonstrating Knowledge of Pedagogy and Content			2a: Creating and Environment of Respect and Rapport		
1b: Demonstrating Knowledge of Students			2b: Establishing a Culture of Learning		
1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes			2c: Managing Classroom Procedures		
1d: Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources			2d: Managing Student Behavior		
1e: Designing Coherent Instruction			2e: Organizing Physical Space		
1f: Designing Student Assessments			Comments:		
Domain 3: Instruction			Domain 4: Professional Responsibility		
	Rating (Check One)			Rating (Check One)	
	Unsatisfactory or Not Observed	Basic +		Unsatisfactory or Not Observed	Basic +
3a: Communicating with Students			4a: Reflecting on Teaching		
3b: Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques			4b: Maintaining Accurate Records		
3c: Engaging Students in Learning			4f: Showing Professionalism		
3d: Using Assessment in Instruction			Comments:		
3e: Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness					

Conclusion: Eligible for Substitute Teaching Not Yet Eligible for Substitute Teaching

Student Teacher Signature & Date	Supervisor Signature & Date
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Directions to university supervisor:

Use the tool above within the first 3 weeks of student teaching to rate the student teacher in all areas other than 4c, 4d, & 4e of the SRU Framework for Teaching. Declare on the document either:

- 1) “*Eligible for Substitute Teaching*”, meaning that all areas in the rubric other than 4c, 4d, & 4e were rated by the university supervisor as “**Basic +**”.
- 2) “*Not Yet Eligible for Substitute Teaching*”, meaning 1 or more areas in the SRU Framework for Teaching other than 4c, 4d, & 4e were rated “**Unsatisfactory or Not Observed.**”
 - a) If the candidate is rated as “*Not Yet Eligible for Substitute Teaching*,” a remediation plan is put into place and a follow-up observation is scheduled within a reasonable amount of time (ideally within 2-weeks) by the university supervisor. At the follow-up observation, the process is repeated until a “*Eligible for Substitute Teaching*” rating is documented and turned into the student teaching office.