A guide to teaching placement within the teacher education programmes

For teacher students, VFU supervisors, and VFU course teachers
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This guide for teaching placement (VFU) is aimed at teacher students, VFU supervisors, and VFU course teachers.

The purpose of the guide is to provide information on the procedures surrounding teaching placement.

The VFU guide was created by the director of studies for teaching placement at the coordinating departments for teacher education at Stockholm University.
# Table of contents

To teacher students, VFU supervisors, and VFU course teachers........2

Teacher education programmes at Stockholm University...............4
   Contact information about VFU in the teacher programs.................................4

Teaching placement (VFU).................................................................5
   VFU courses .............................................................................................5
   The supervisor’s role .............................................................................5

Before the VFU course starts..........................................................5
   Admission requirements ........................................................................5
   VFU course registration .........................................................................5
   Police record extract ................................................................................5
   Confidentiality and secrecy ......................................................................6
   VFU portfolio ............................................................................................6
   Contact with the VFU supervisor .............................................................6

During the VFU course.......................................................................7
   Substitute teacher position .....................................................................7
   Supervision meetings .............................................................................7
   Interrupted VFU .....................................................................................7
   Risk of failing ..........................................................................................7
   Three-party meeting ...............................................................................7
   Two-party meeting ..................................................................................7
   Self-evaluation .......................................................................................8

After the VFU course.........................................................................9
   Administrative procedures in the case of a failed VFU .............................9
Teacher education programmes at Stockholm University

The programmes consist of three parts: educational science, subject studies and subject didactics, and teaching placement (VFU). Subject studies constitute the most extensive part of the training, and the student will gain comprehensive knowledge of subjects relevant to the training. In addition, the student will take courses in educational science, which cover theories on learning, social relations in school, special education, school law, ethics, etc. The student will be given tools to support the children or pupils in their learning and development.

During the training, the student will also gain knowledge about the organisation of teaching and learning. The programmes provide practical and theoretical tools to make visible and follow one’s own and the children’s or pupils’ learning through, for example, pedagogical documentation for assessing and developing learning processes in various preschool and school subjects in line with the current curricula and policy documents.

Contact information about VFU in the teacher programs

Placement Secretariat
Questions regarding your VFU placement are emailed to the VFU secretariat: vfu@su.se.
Telephone inquiries are answered as long as possible. Tel: 08 - 12 07 67 70

VFU portfolio
Questions regarding the VFU portfolio are emailed to e-mail: portfoljvfu@su.se.

Teacher Education Programme in Early Childhood Education and Teacher Education Programme for Primary School, Specialising in School-Age Education and Care
Department of Child and Youth Studies (BUV)
E-mail: vfu@buv.su.se

Teacher Education Programme for Pre-School and Primary School Years 1-3 and Teacher Education Programme in Language Education
Camilla Gamrell, Department of Language Education (ISD)
E-mail: vfu@isd.su.se

Teacher education programme for primary school years 4-6, Teacher education Programme in Mathematics, Science and Technology and Bridging Teacher Education Programme in Mathematics, Science and Technology
Department of Mathematics and Science Education (MND)
E-mail: vfu@mnd.su.se

Bridging Teacher Education Programme in Geography, History, Religion and Social Sciences Education and Bridging Teacher Education Programme in Humanities and Social Sciences Education
Karin Gunnarsson, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Education (HSD)
E-mail: karin.gunnarsson@hsd.su.se

Vocational Teacher Education Programme
Eva Eliasson, Department of Education (IPD)
E-mail: eva.eliasson@edu.su.se
Teaching placement (VFU)

Teaching placement is an important part of the teacher education programmes. The student will be placed in a preschool or school that is relevant to the training in a municipality within the county of Stockholm. The teaching placement part of the programme comprises a total of 20 weeks (30 credits). Over the course of the training, the student will take an increasingly active role in the preschool or school’s activities in order to be able to – in the final VFU course – essentially assume responsibility for the work in a small group of children or the teaching in a class. The student will receive continuous supervision by a VFU supervisor at the preschool or school, who will support the student in various ways as they develop into a professional pedagogue. The VFU course teacher at Stockholm University (SU) will prepare and support the student ahead of the VFU periods, as well as lead VFU seminars during the courses. In several of the VFU courses, the student will be visited in the preschool or school by a VFU course teacher. So-called three-party meetings will take place during these visits.

VFU courses

The teaching placement component of the teacher education programmes consists of three to five courses depending on the programme. Each VFU course has a number of intended learning outcomes that the student must achieve in order to pass the course (see the VFU portfolio for information on examinations in the syllabus, course description, and VFU report).

The supervisor’s role

The VFU supervisor should be highly familiar with the intended learning outcomes of the VFU course in order to be able to plan the teaching placement together with the student in the best way possible. The supervisor should also review the student’s documentation in the digital VFU portfolio, but above all, the supervisor should be a discussion partner who will guide and support the student.

At the end of the VFU course, the supervisor is responsible for filling in a digital VFU report that can be found in the VFU portfolio. In the VFU report, the supervisor will assess whether or not the student has achieved the intended learning outcomes. The VFU report is one of several supporting documents that the VFU course examiner at Stockholm University will look at when examining the course.

Before the VFU course starts

Admission requirements

All VFU courses have entry requirements which must be fulfilled no later than four weeks before the course starts. The entry requirements are specified in the VFU course syllabus. If the entry requirements are not fulfilled, the student will not be permitted to go on teaching placement.

VFU course registration

Registration to the VFU course typically takes place no later than three weeks into the semester; however, the student has the right to register up until four weeks before the course starts. In such cases, the student has to contact their supervisor and announce that they intend to go on teaching placement. This only occurs when a student has not fulfilled the entry requirements at the start of the semester.

Police record extract

The Swedish Parliament has decided that teacher students and participants in municipal adult education, who go on teaching placement as a part of their training, must undergo a records check. This check is done in order to increase the protection of children and young people and minimise the risk of them being exposed to various types of victimisation by people working in preschools, schools, and childcare. The student must obtain a police record extract from the Swedish National Police Authority before starting their VFU. The application form can be found on the Police website, www.polisen.se. It may take up to 1 month to receive the record extract. This also applies to all the international students who are going to do teaching placement in Sweden. They need to obtain a registry extract from the police in their home country.

The record extract should be submitted to the headmaster (or equivalent) of the school where the student will go on teaching placement. It is not the higher education institution, but the headmaster of the school, that decides whether or not the student can be received at the school. The record extract is valid for 1 year, which means that the student has to provide several record extracts during their training.
Confidentiality and secrecy
Confidentiality involves a prohibition to disclose information and is a restriction of the Swedish principle of public access to official records. The sensitive information that school personnel process in their work with children or pupils is protected by regulations in the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act (2009:400). When the student is on teaching placement, the student is bound by secrecy. Secrecy applies to all parts of life and must be particularly observed in connection with travel to and from the preschool or school, in conversations at home, and upon returning to the university. When the student follows up their VFU and shares their experiences with others, the information must be anonymised so that no one can identify the child, pupil, or any close relatives. The municipality where the student completes their teaching placement may request that the student sign a confidentiality agreement. The penalty for breach of confidentiality is a fine or imprisonment for a maximum of one year, often combined with paying damages. More information can be found at: su.se/vfu/studentinformation.

VFU portfolio
Based on the relevant VFU course’s intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria, the student will define individual goals in a digital VFU portfolio, as well as document, evaluate, and reflect on their own learning process. This approach aims to help the student make their learning visible and put it in relation to the intended learning outcomes of the course, as well as develop their capacity for self-evaluation.

The VFU portfolio contains all documentation relating to the relevant VFU course (e.g. the syllabus, supervisor letter, and VFU report). The student and the supervisor will jointly develop a plan that substantiates the student’s assignments during the course. The time and place of the student’s own learning activity or teaching in different groups or classes should be included in this plan. It is an advantage if times for regular supervision meetings can be established. The student should document the plan in their VFU portfolio.

The student should give the VFU supervisor access to their VFU portfolio. The supervisor will receive an invitation to the portfolio by e-mail, accept the invitation, and then log in using a guest account, EduID or Skolfederation via the link in the e-mail. If the supervisor does not have an account, click on https://vfu.su.se followed by EduID to create an account.

Contact with the VFU supervisor
Once the student has received their placement, the student should immediately contact their supervisor regarding making a visit to their preschool or school and plan the teaching placement together with the VFU supervisor. Students who already have a placement from a previous VFU period should contact their supervisor at the beginning of the semester during which the teaching placement will take place, although no later than one month before the teaching placement starts.
During the VFU course

Substitute teacher position
A substitute teaching position means that the student has sole responsibility for the children or pupils, as well as the pedagogical activities or teaching in the group of children or pupils. The student is not permitted to hold a substitute teaching position while on teaching placement. If a situation arises where the VFU supervisor is absent, it is thus important that another supervisor is able to temporarily replace the principal supervisor. The student is not permitted to take over the supervisor’s teaching on their own.

Supervision meetings
During the VFU period, formative supervision meetings, where the professional development matrix may provide support, should take place regularly. The student’s skills will develop with an emphasis on concrete situations that will be problematised, highlighted, and analysed from various perspectives during the supervision. The supervision should contribute to the student systematically developing their analytical and reflective skills, which are a prerequisite for increased awareness and capacity for development. In these meetings, the student will receive help planning their teaching or their work with the group of children, as well as the opportunity to reflect on their experiences. In addition, the student will have the opportunity to gain broader and deeper knowledge of what governs their own activities, as well as reflect on perspectives on knowledge, the professional role, and the role of the preschool/school in society.

Interrupted VFU
If a student does not complete a started VFU course, the supervisor must notify the VFU course teacher as soon as possible. The student will not receive a grade on the course, but the course teacher will inform the course administrator who will make a note in Ladok (or equivalent system for reporting results) that one out of two opportunities has been used.

Risk of failing
All intended learning outcomes must be achieved in order to pass the course. If the supervisor, during the teaching placement, deems that there is a risk that the student will not achieve all of the intended learning outcomes of the course, the supervisor should contact the VFU course teacher as soon as possible. If not all of the intended learning outcomes have been achieved, the student must retake the entire course.

Three-party meeting
Most VFU courses include a so-called three-party meeting at the preschool or school, which is attended by the student, the VFU supervisor, and the VFU course teacher. The recurring three-party meetings should help create continuity and progression in the student’s professional development. Starting points for the meeting is the student’s self-evaluation and the intended learning outcomes. The meeting should be similar to a performance review with a formative focus. The meeting aims to support the student’s development by discussing the student’s strengths and potential areas of development, as well as possible ways forward within the profession.

The VFU supervisor and the VFU course teacher will also make an assessment of the student’s prospects of achieving the intended learning outcomes at the end of the course. However, this preliminary assessment is no guarantee that a certain grade will be achieved, as it is an estimation. The grade will not be set until the entire course has been completed and an overall assessment is made of the achieved results at the end of the course. A prerequisite for a good meeting is that all parties have familiarised themselves with the student’s self-evaluation, the intended learning outcomes of the course, and the professional development matrix.

Two-party meeting
Some VFU courses implement an assessment meeting instead of a two-party meeting. In these cases, the supervisor and the student will conduct the assessment meeting. The meeting should take place in the middle of the course. This meeting should also be based on the student’s self-evaluation and the intended learning outcomes of the course. If the supervisor is uncertain whether the student will achieve the intended learning outcomes at the end of the course, or wants help with the assessment, the supervisor should immediately contact the VFU course teacher. If necessary, the VFU course teacher will come to the school and conduct a three-party meeting.
Self-evaluation

Before the three-party meeting or the two-party meeting, the student will write a self-evaluation in the form of reflections on their development based on the individual goals, the intended learning outcomes of the course, and, if necessary, the professional development matrix.

In the self-evaluation, the student should describe, in as much detail as possible, how they work to achieve the goals. The student should describe and reflect on their experiences, and the following questions may serve as the basis:

1. **How have you worked to achieve your goals?**
   What concrete activities have you carried out? In what ways have you used your VFU supervisor, your colleagues, and the group of children or pupils to obtain feedback?

2. **How can you see that you have achieved the various goals?**
   Describe concrete situations where you can see that you have achieved the goals. How does it become clear that you have not fully or partially achieved the goals? What else is required from you in order to achieve your goals? What can you continue to work on?

3. **What have you learned?**
   What opportunities and difficulties have you spotted? What new insights have you gained regarding your subject-specific knowledge and your knowledge about subject didactics, yourself as a pedagogue, your communication skills, and your ability to organise for learning?

4. **What would you like to address during the meeting?**
After the VFU course

The final examination of the VFU course will be carried out by the VFU course teachers. The VFU supervisor will provide a written statement on the student's results in the VFU report that is included in the student's VFU portfolio. In the VFU report, the supervision should state whether or not the student has met the criteria for each intended learning outcome within the course.

If the student has been absent one or more days during the course, the report should be filled in once the student has made up for these days. The student and the supervisor will agree on when to make up for the days of absence. The days must be made up for within three operational months from the end of the course, or the student will have to retake the entire course. The student cannot receive any grade on the course until all days have been completed. The VFU report constitutes a key basis of assessment for the VFU course teachers, who will grade the course according to the scale Pass with Credit, Pass, and Fail. After the course, a student evaluation of the VFU course will be carried out.

Administrative procedures in the case of a failed VFU

The following procedure applies when a student fails a completed VFU course:

The examiner or director of studies of VFU will call the student to a meeting at Stockholm University. In the call, the student should be informed of the possibility to contact the Stockholm University Student Union for support by the union's student ombudsmen. At the meeting, the grounds for failure will be explained to the student and summarised in minutes. The student will be informed of their right to an additional examination. A teaching placement spot for re-examination will be discussed. Based on the meeting, an individual plan for the student's re-examination will be established, in which any potential support measures will be described. The plan will be attached to the minutes.

The minutes and the plan will be signed by both parties and recorded by the examiner or director of studies of VFU at the department providing the course. The examiner or Director of studies of VFU is responsible for forwarding the documentation to the course administration so that it is available for the student's re-examination. The department providing the course has the follow-up responsibility for re-examination. This includes collaborating with the hosting VFU supervisor. The department is also responsible for notifying the Director of studies of VFU in the municipality about the student's re-examination or non-completion.

The examination rules are specified in the respective syllabus. These rules of procedure were adopted by the coordination group at Stockholm University on 2012-11-14.
Teaching placement within the teacher education programmes

su.se/lararutbildningar/om-oss/teacher-education