The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Office of Educator Preparation and Accountability

Fitness to Lead and Policy Exit Guidelines and Procedures for Professional Dispositions in the Department of Organization and School Leadership for Master's in Educational Leadership The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

I. PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS STATEMENT

This policy applies to all applicants for admission and students enrolled in the master's in education leadership and the Principal Certification Program at the College of Education and P-16 Integration. This includes applicants in both the Accelerated Online Program and the Traditional Face-to-Face Program. The master's in educational leadership and the Principal Certification Program are designed to prepare applicants for the role of a certified school administrator academically. However, satisfying the curriculum and testing requirements alone does not make an applicant worthy of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley to recommend an applicant for candidacy to the State of Texas for certification.

Students are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical, responsible, and professional manner. This conduct is evaluated through the Leadership and Fitness Dispositions (LFD) policy as an element of students' performance in the program. The purpose of the LFD review process is to regularly monitor students' professional and personal development to ensure students demonstrate appropriate progress towards developing the necessary behaviors, attitudes, and professional competencies to practice as school leaders. Students who do not comply with the LFD policy may be removed from the program.

The Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 241, Rule 241.1 (a), states that "Due to the critical role the principal plays in campus effectiveness and student achievement, and consistent with the Texas Education Code (TEC), Chapter 21.046(c), the rules adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification ensure that each candidate for the Principal Certificate is of the highest caliber and possesses the knowledge and skills necessary for success." Therefore, all principal candidates in the UTRGV principal preparation program are expected to demonstrate that they are prepared to lead schools. This preparation results from the combination of successful completion of university coursework, successful field experiences, and the demonstration of required professional skills that all principal candidates should possess. The standards of learning required to satisfy TEC.21.046(b)(1)-(6) will emphasize instructional leadership, administration, supervision and communication skills, curriculum and instruction management, performance evaluation, organization, and fiscal management. The Department of Organization and School Leadership also believes in a set of core values for all leadership candidates: honesty, authenticity, the vital importance of relationships, and intellectual, moral, and ethical integrity.

Students in both programs are responsible for being knowledgeable about and complying with the requirements and standards of the University and particular to their program. This includes the Regents' Rules and Regulations, the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures, the UTRGV Catalog, and other program policies, procedures, and criteria, including those addressed in this document and incorporates the Department of Organization and School Leadership Dispositions and the Code of Ethics and Practices for Educators in Texas, Title 19, Texas Administrative Code, Rule 247.2

A. Academic Requirements

Scholastic Integrity

The principal candidate must demonstrate honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences, and qualifications, doing one's work, giving credit for the ideas, and providing proper citation of source materials.

II. Essential Leadership Abilities

The ability to perform the following functions, with or without reasonable accommodations, is required:

1. Communication Skills

The principal candidate must demonstrate sufficient written and oral skills to comprehend information and communicate ideas and feelings in English.

a. ***Written***: Writes clearly, uses correct grammar and spelling. Demonstrates sufficient skills in written English to understand the content presented in the program and to complete all written assignments as specified by faculty.
b. ***Oral***: Communicates effectively in English with other students, faculty, staff, and professionals. Expresses ideas and feelings clearly and demonstrates a willingness and an ability to listen to others. Demonstrates sufficient spoken English skills to understand the program's content, complete all oral assignments adequately, and meet the objectives of field placement experiences, as specified by faculty.

2. Psychomotor Skills

The principal candidate must exhibit motor and sensory abilities to attend and participate in class and practicum placements.

3. Intellectual and Cognitive Abilities

The principal candidate must measure, calculate, reason, analyze, synthesize, integrate, and apply information.

4. Behavioral and Social Attributes

The principal candidate must possess the emotional health required to fully use their intellectual abilities, such as exercising sound judgment and developing mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with others such as the teachers, parents, students, and colleagues. Candidates must possess the ability to function effectively under stress, adapt to changing environments and display flexibility.

III. PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS GUIDELINES

The following Professional Dispositions Guidelines are to be followed by all students and candidates in the Department of Organization and School Leadership. The standards referenced are those of the Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 241, Rule 241.1, students and candidates are responsible for identifying and following professional standards and policies for their state.

A. Dispositions

1. Required Professional Demeanor and Work Habit Dispositions

a. Exhibits confidence in the performance of daily tasks and leadership activities

b. Exhibits initiative and creativity in performing daily tasks and in problem-solving

situations

c. Demonstrates a strong work ethic and completes tasks and projects efficiently and effectively

d. Demonstrates effective organizational and management skills in performing tasks

e. Exhibits commitment to the mission and vision of an organization

f. Exhibits dedication and conscientiousness in leadership performance

g. Models professional conduct appropriate for school leaders

h. Demonstrates the ability to work as a team member and team builder to accomplish organizational tasks

2. Moral and Ethical Dispositions

a. Believes that all children can learn and succeed regardless of student needs and varying abilities

b. Treats individuals with equity, dignity, and respect

c. Models honest, genuineness, and ethical behaviors

d. Exhibits responsibility for one's actions

e. Abides and implements school district mission, policies, procedures, and programs

f. Models ethical behavior and fairness

g. Promotes social justice

h. Safeguards the values of democracy, equity and promotes the values of diversity

i. Evaluates moral and legal consequences of decisions

j. Builds and sustains trustworthy relationships

k. Works to serve others

l. Maintains confidentiality

3. Intellectual Integrity/Cognitive Dispositions

a. Models and promotes the highest standard of conduct, ethical principles, and integrity in decision making, actions, and behavior

b. Abides by the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators

c. Serves an advocate for all children

d. Articulates the importance of education in a free democratic society

e. Seeks professional development, must be inquiring, a learner, intellectual curiosity

f. Thinks analytically about educational issues

g. Reflective about their practice

h. Flexible, open to new ideas, willing and able to modify their beliefs and practice

4. Relationship Dispositions
    - **a.** Communicates effectively in oral, written, and electronic form
    - **b.** Engages in a cooperative and collaborative manner
    - **c.** Approaches situations with a positive outlook
    - **d.** Practices effective listening skills
    - **e.** Exhibits the ability to motivate, encourage and involve others toward shared leadership
    - **f.** Builds relationships in a culturally appropriate manner

IV. PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING DIGRESSIONS FROM OSL PROFESSIONAL DISPOSITIONS POLICY

The following procedures will be implemented when digressions in Professional Dispositions Guidelines and the Exit Policy occur.

A. The FTL Evaluation Process

All students will be evaluated based on their instructor's Essential Abilities and Fitness to Lead Standards (FTL) at the end of every semester. In addition, students can be evaluated as necessary throughout the program. An FTL review may be initiated on any student if a faculty member, staff member, course instructor, program advisor, or field supervisor believes the student has displayed behavior, which suggests the student does not possess sufficient competency on one or more essential abilities or FTL criteria. Students' competence is evaluated using the *Fitness to Lead Standards* and documented with the *FTL Evaluation Form*. Admission into the master's program does not guarantee fitness to remain a student in the program. Faculty also may initiate an FTP review at any time for:

- Students who engage in illegal or unethical behaviors,
- Students who present a threat to the wellbeing of others, or
- Students who violate the UTRGV Student Code of Conduct, the Handbook of Operating
- Procedures (HOP), any other applicable UTRGV policies or procedures, or any other UTRGV departmental policies or practices.

In such cases, depending upon the circumstances, the fitness to lead process may result in the student being dismissed from the master's in educational leadership program.

Faculty members, staff members, course instructors, program advisors, and field supervisors will evaluate all students according to these standards. Students will have the opportunity to participate and respond at each step of the FTL process.

Performance on the FTL standards will be rated on a scale of 0 (competence not achieved) to 1 (competence performed) described in the *Fitness to Lead Standards*. A rating of 1 on all FTL standards will indicate competence. The *FTL Evaluation Form* will then be shared with the student and a copy placed in the student's TK20 file. A rating of 0 on any of the FTP standards will initiate the following procedure:

1. The student will be contacted to schedule a meeting to review the *FTL Evaluation Form*. The conference would be held with the issuing faculty member unless the FTL process was

initiated because the student engaged in illegal or unethical activities, presented a threat to the wellbeing of others, or violated the UTRGV Student Code of Conduct or the Handbook of Operating Procedures (in which case, the student will be referred to the Educator Preparation Committee.)

The student has five business days to respond to the request to schedule a meeting. If the student does not respond by the close of business on the fifth business day, the matter will proceed to step 3 below.

2. At the meeting, the issuing faculty will review the *FTL Evaluation Form* with the student and discuss a remediation plan. Within ten business days after the meeting, the issuing faculty will provide a final copy of the remediation plan (incorporating any changes agreed upon at the meeting) to the student for review and signature. The student will have ten business days to review, sign, and return the remediation plan. Failure of the student to sign and/or return the remediation plan by the close of business on the tenth business day will not impede the process and may be considered during the fitness to lead the process.

   The remediation plan may include

   - Specific competency(ies) from the *Fitness to Lead Standards* which require remediation,
   - Specific recommendations to achieve remediation,
   - Detailed requirements to demonstrate remediation efforts have been successful, and,
   - A specific deadline for subsequent monitoring to evaluate progress.

3. The student and issuing faculty should retain copies of the signed *FTL Evaluation Form,* and the remediation plan and documents will be placed in the student's TK20 folder. In more serious or recurring incidents, the faculty member may refer the student to the chair and/or program coordinator. Together, the faculty member, chair, and/or program coordinator may develop an action plan to address dispositions and/or correct the behavior. When department efforts are not sufficient or successful in remediating the dispositional concerns, the student will be referred to the Educator Preparation Committee if:

   a. The FTL process was initiated because the student engaged in illegal or unethical activities, presented a threat to the wellbeing of others, or violated the UTRGV Student Code of Conduct or the Handbook of Operating Procedures,
   b. A student fails to respond to the issuing faculty's request to schedule a meeting to review the *FTL Evaluation Form*,
   c. A student fails to show reasonable progress in the remediation plan, or
   d. A student receives more than one *FTL Evaluation Form* rated 0 during their Program of Study.

B. General Dismissal Policies and Procedures

The dismissal of a candidate from the EPP is a significant event for the candidate, the program, and the program faculty and represents the determination by the faculty that the candidate should be dismissed based on one or more grounds set forth above.

Dismissal of a candidate based on concerns relating to professional dispositions or abilities is typically the outcome of careful inquiry and collection of data from multiple sources, as well as communication with the candidate regarding dispositions concerns and a growth action plan as outlined in the Fitness to Teach, Fitness to Practice, or Fitness to Lead policies.

Dismissal from the EPP is determined by the Educator Preparation Committee (EPC). This may occur at any time while the candidate is enrolled in the EPP. Matters involving recurring or serious dispositional concerns as determined at the department level by faculty/staff, and/or administrators, will be referred to the Co-Chairs of the EPC who will schedule a meeting to address these concerns with the EPC. Any other matter involving one or more potential grounds for dismissal of a candidate shall be reported to the EPC Co-Chair or EPC for consideration.

The EPC Co-Chairs will determine whether the candidate's matter should be referred to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) for review under the applicable University policies. If the matter is not referred to SRR, the EPC shall review and decide the outcome of the candidate's matter. The EPC may request and gather information in relation to its review.

Candidates will be notified in writing that their matter is being reviewed by the EPC and the date, time and location of the EPC meeting during which the matter will be discussed. At the EPC meeting the candidate may:

- Attend the EPC meeting in person or virtually in the case of a virtual meeting (e.g. Teams, Zoom);
- Submit a written statement and supporting documentation in response to the matter being reviewed by the EPC;
- Represent themself at the meeting and address the EPC.

If, after reviewing the information presented, the EPC determines that the candidate should not continue in the program, the EPC will advise the candidate of their dismissal from the program. The EPC's determination of dismissal will be provided to the candidate in writing, including the reason(s) for dismissal and the effective date of dismissal.

A dismissed candidate may dispute the decision of the EPC by appealing to the CEP Dean whose decision is final. The dismissed candidate must file a written appeal to the Dean within five (5) business days of receipt of the EPC's written decision. The candidate's appeal must include a justification statement for appeal and all documentation provided by the candidate to the EPC.

Within fifteen (15) business days from receipt of the candidate's appeal, the Dean will provide a written decision to the candidate and the EPC Chair. The decision of the Dean is the final appellate review.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Office of Educator Preparation and Accountability

Fitness to Lead (FTL) Evaluation Form
Masters in Educational Leadership Program
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Student Name: Student ID:

Evaluator Name: Date:

Your professional performance and dispositions have been evaluated according to the Master's in Educational Leadership Program Fitness to Lead policy and Exit Policy.

Academic Achievement and Integrity

Standard	Competence Not Achieved (0)	Competence Achieved (1)	No Opportunity to Observe
Maintain a cumulative GPA of 3.0 or better and present grades of C or better in courses to be counted toward the degree.			
Demonstrate honesty and integrity by being truthful about background, experiences, and qualifications, doing one's work, giving credit for others' ideas, and providing proper citation of source materials.			
Demonstrate sufficient written and oral skills to comprehend information and effectively communicate ideas and feelings.			

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Office of Educator Preparation and Accountability

Professional Dispositions

Standard	Competence Not Achieved (0)	Competence Achieved (1)	No Opportunity to Observe
Display multicultural competence			
Be open to new ideas, responsive, adaptable, and cooperative.			
Be aware of their impact on others			
Receptive to and using feedback			
Respond to conflict appropriately			
Accept personal responsibility			
Be dependable in meeting obligations			

Ethical and Legal Considerations

Standard	Competence Not Achieved (0)	Competence Achieved (1)	No Opportunity to Observe
Conform with standard practices and ethical conduct rules toward students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents, and community members.			
Maintain confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.			

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Office of Educator Preparation and Accountability

Is competence achieved in each FTP Standard observed? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If competence in each FTP standard observed is **not** achieved, describe the specific behavior(s) indicating this:

What steps does the student need to take to remediate this issue? *(include specific recommendations, how success will be evaluated, and a deadline for subsequent monitoring of progress)*

Signatures (acknowledging student receipt of this evaluation)

Student:

Witness/Others in Attendance:

Evaluator:

Witness/Other in Attendance:

Issue resolved/remediation successful Date:

Issue referred to Faculty Review Committee Date:

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Office of Educator Preparation and Accountability

Fitness to Lead (FTL) Evaluation—Faculty Review Committee
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Masters in Educational Leadership Program

Student Name: Student ID Number:

Date: Committee Member Name:

The Faculty Review Committee will meet with the students to discuss this form and any actions resulting from the FTP review.

☐ The student has been referred to the Faculty Review Committee because:

☐ The student did not show sufficient progress on a remediation plan.

☐ The student did not respond to an evaluator's request to schedule a meeting to review the FTP Evaluation Form.

☐ The student has received more than one 0 rating on an FTP Evaluation form during his/her program of study.

☐ The student engaged in illegal or unethical activities, presented a threat to the wellbeing of others or violated the UTRGV Student Code of Conduct or the Handbook of Operating Procedures.

The specific areas of concern that have resulted in this referral, including any standards where the student has not achieved competence, are as follows:

After examining evidence presented from previous FTL reviews, information from the student, and information from faculty/staff involved in the case, the Faculty Review Committee has made the following recommendation:

☐ The student is allowed to proceed in the program without a further remediation plan.

☐ The student is allowed to proceed in the program with a remediation plan (*see attached specific recommendations, how success will be evaluated, and a deadline for subsequent monitoring of progress*).

☐ The student is dismissed from the program effective immediately.

Student Signature *(indicates notification of the decision and is not an indication of agreement)*

Committee Member Committee Member Committee Member

For students placed on remediation plan:

Issue resolved/remediation successful Date:

Issue returned to Faculty Review Committee Date: