

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teacher Education Program

Information Night Q&A

November 4, 2025

Question: Are applicants expected to prepare themselves with ASL, or is it taught in the program?

Answer: We do require all applicants to have two courses in ASL prior to the program, so they have some familiarity with it. Particularly for those who want to work in a signed bilingual setting, the expectation is that you come into our program with enough ASL skill and fluency to teach in that language. Many applicants (though not all) who are fluent users of the language are interested in a signed bilingual setting for their practicum placements and future jobs.

Teacher candidates enter our program to learn how to teach children who are deaf or hard of hearing, not to learn a language of instruction. It would not be feasible to teach you an entire language while we are teaching you how to be a teacher, nor is it the mandate for our program.

A similar example would be if you were taking a program in how to teach in a French immersion program. You don't go to that program to learn French, you go to that program to learn how to teach children using French as the language of instruction, and you must come prepared with a certain level of French proficiency already.

Question: Are teacher candidates required to be deaf to participate in practicum?

Answer: No. If you are fluent in the language of instruction, and ASL is the language of instruction, then you are more than welcome to try out a practicum in that setting. We have practicum facilitators that can evaluate you in that setting, and we will provide you with a practicum in the bilingual, bicultural setting, if that is where your experience and expertise lie.

Question: Are classes held during the day or evening for the full-time program?

Answer: Classes are held through the day, typically between 10:00 am and 3:00 or 4:00 pm, fitting into a standard workday. If you are in the part-time program, you can view the recordings at your leisure, in the evenings or the next day.

Question: Is it possible to do a dual MEd or BEd concurrently with this AQ?

Answer: No. A completed BEd is required to enter the program, though you may still be finishing your degree when you apply. York does not have a structure for a dual MEd and DHH AQ, as each of these programs is a full workload and would be overwhelming to combine.

Question: Is there ASL interpretation in all courses?

Answer: York's Student Accessibility Services office (SAS) manages student accommodations, including ASL interpretation. We work closely with their office to provide this and other accommodations when there is a student in the classroom who requires it.

Question: I am an Ontario Certified teacher. If I have completed the ASL Part 1 and Part 2 prerequisite courses, do I still have to complete the DHH program to be a hearing itinerant, or is there a different process?

Answer: Yes. This program provides the certification to work as a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing in whatever setting you find yourself, whether that's a congregated class of deaf and hard of hearing students, a school for the deaf, or a hearing itinerant position.

Question: If I live in or near the GTA, is there an in-person option for the part-time program?

Answer: There is no in-person program for part-time students as a requirement. The part-time program is typically taken by teachers who are working full time, so they are not available during the day to come to class and participate synchronously on Zoom. However, if you are a part-time student and you happen to have that time in your schedule, you may be able to join the synchronous class at the instructor's discretion.

Question: Are the enhanced courses required, or just the core courses?

Answer: All six core courses are required, plus everyone must take three of the enhanced courses. We currently offer six enhanced course components, of which you are required to choose three. Two of those six courses require students to have an ASL proficiency (ASPLI 3) to take them.

Students in the part-time program typically complete one enhanced course each winter term of the three years in the program, completing the final course prior to the spring practicum.

Question: Are teachers of deaf and hard-of-hearing students paid according to the A1A4 salary grid for teachers? If I'm at a certain level as an OCT teacher, do I start at the same level as a teacher of DHH students? Is there some sort of bonus to being a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing?

Answer: The teacher pay scale is very individual, and we cannot speak to how it is determined or executed by the province. All qualifications, whether it's being a teacher of the deaf, or having a master's degree, or other AQs, are add-ons to your pay scale, as well as your years of experience. This qualification would definitely enhance your pay, but the particulars will depend on where you were to begin with; there is no simple answer to say it moves you from one particular spot to another.

Question: For the application, what counts as an academic reference if I have been out of university for some time?

Answer: We ask for three references, and we do suggest one of them be academic. However, we know that many of our applicants have been out of school or university for quite a long time. Because we are a university program, academic references are a common requirement, but, if, for example, you've been teaching for 20 years and have decided to make a shift and work with deaf and hard-of-hearing students, we are less interested in what you were doing 20 years ago in university. We're much more interested in what you've been doing lately.

The best advice for non-academic references is that we will be looking for references from your employment, your place of work, something that can speak to your professional practice. References that are more personal, such as a friend, relative, or colleague, tend to carry less weight. What we are looking for is good references that can speak to what's in your CV, where you've been teaching, etc. Examples might include someone in a supervisory position at your place of work, or someone who managed or directed if you volunteered with a group that had deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

Academic references will be more germane for those applicants who recently finished their BEd a year or two ago, because they may not have professional references yet. We do take your context, background, and history into account when we're looking at references.

Question: As a teacher of deaf and hard-of-hearing students, would I be going from school to school, attending to the DHH students in each school, or would I have my own classroom with multiple DHH students that I'm teaching full time?

Answer: We see both of those settings, but it's much more common in the current context to have children being visited by a teacher of the deaf while they're also attending regular classrooms in the mainstream setting. There are some congregated settings in some of the larger urban school boards, but it's less and less common across the province and across the country as well.

Question: What is the tuition fee for the part-time and full-time program?

Answer: This is a tuition-free program for Ontario residents, funded by the Ministry of Education. As with courses in all university programs, there are some costs such as textbooks and associated course fees, which are required of all students.

We welcome out-of-province applicants to our program, but please note that there are tuition fees for non-Ontario residents.

Question: How many students in the program are part of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community?

Answer: We have a very heterogenous group of applicants and active students with a wide variety of backgrounds, including members of the DHoH community, people with different kinds of hearing loss, different backgrounds and experiences, parents of deaf children, etc.

While our program is quite diverse, we do not require applicants or active students to self-identify. Students are always welcome to share their backgrounds and experiences, but they may choose not to.

Question: Is it possible to join the full-time program but complete the practicum in the following year? Or does the practicum need to be done during that year?

Answer: While the advised timeline for part-time study is three years, we do work with students on an individual basis who may need extra time. Likewise, the full-time program is designed to be completed within a particular time frame (one year), but we understand that

life events may impact student timelines. Applicants who are invited to an interview will have the opportunity to discuss their situations and any concerns with program faculty.

Students taking the Teaching and Learning Seminar course are required to complete at least one practicum placement concurrently with that course, which must be done in the fall term. If something happens and you can't complete both in the same academic year, you can work with the instructor to make a plan to roll the second placement over to the following academic year (typically spring). This pathway does delay graduation from the program, but it is not uncommon for students to defer a course or practicum. However, while you're taking the Teaching and Learning Seminar course, the expectation is that you complete at least one practicum, because the whole purpose of the course is to support you while you're doing your practicum placement.

Question: Can you please explain the part-time practicum for those who are concurrently working?

Answer: The practicum placement for the part-time program starts in the third year, after you have two years of the program and coursework under your belt. You take it alongside the Teaching and Learning Seminar course, which gets you ready to go out in your practicum placements.

There are two 20-consecutive-day practicum placements that you need to complete, plus individual single days. The first practicum and the single days occur in the fall, and they help you to get ready to work with deaf kids, get a better sense of what you will be doing, and make better connections in the program. If you can't complete both practicum placements in that third year as a part-time student, you can roll the second practicum, which is the one that you take when you finish the program, into a fourth year after you've finished all your coursework. Many people do that, either in the fall or the winter of the fourth year of the program.

If you're already working with deaf and hard-of-hearing kids, we sit down with you and look at the possibility of doing your practicum in your current position. This means that we need to discuss all the logistics with the people at your school board, or in the setting that you're working in, to make sure that it suits everyone well.

We are only able to offer practicum placements that we are offered by the school boards, so we can't promise anything regarding where you will be placed. We work with school boards to make sure that we get opportunities for all our students, but it doesn't mean that we are guaranteed everything that we (or our students) want. We offer you what we're offered and collaborate to make that work for each individual teacher candidate.

Question: Are there any subsidies for the ASL courses required for admission?

Answer: We are not aware of any subsidies. Depending on your location, your employer or school board may be able to offer suggestions.

Question: How many students do you admit to the part-time program?

Answer: Our total enrollment across both full-time and part-time programs is approximately 50 students. We admit approximately 20 students each year, which we do our best to split evenly between the full-time and part-time programs. Exact numbers depend a lot on the applicant pool each year. While it is a somewhat competitive admissions process, we do encourage you to apply!

Question: If I'm already working with deaf students, am I able to complete my practicum at my current school?

Answer: The answer is usually yes, though we cannot make any firm guarantees in advance. We always have to look at the situation and work with your administration to make sure that it can happen. However, in most cases, at least one of the two practicum placements can be completed in the classroom that you're working in.

Question: For a teacher performance appraisal, are there specific things you are looking for in relation to an applicant's suitability for the program?

Answer: One of the things that we look for is that you have some sense of what the job is and why you are interested in being a teacher of the deaf, what experience you bring to it, and what knowledge you have of working with deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Some people will have more than others; someone who is a recent graduate will be in a different position than someone who has been teaching a long time, but we are looking for people who have a passion for teaching deaf and hard-of-hearing students and have shown that through some work or experiences working with deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

We also tend to look for people who have some background working with primary, junior, or intermediate students, as a lot of the focus in teaching deaf and hard-of-hearing students is in the younger years. Any background in language-related areas is also considered a plus.

Regardless of these criteria, when you are putting your application together, put your best foot forward, and tell us why you want to be a teacher of the deaf. That is what we look for, in addition to your background and what you bring to it.

Question: How much time do you need to take off from work to do the practicum in the part-time program?

Answer: There are two 20-consecutive-day practicum placements, the first one in the fall, and the second one in the spring, after you've completed the rest of the program. There are also approximately three single days in the fall, which provide opportunities for you to visit classrooms where you probably will not be working. We take a look at your profile and decide with you what would be the best practicum placement, but we also want you to be aware of places where other teachers of the deaf may have opportunities to work, and for you to get a sense of the students that you could be interacting with in different settings.

Between these two placement blocks and the single days (typically Mondays and/or Fridays), the time commitment is about 43 days total. The two 20-day leaves need to be separated, as teacher candidates cannot complete both practicum blocks back-to-back. The first practicum placement needs to be completed in the fall, but the second one, if not completed in the spring of your third year, can roll into a fourth year of the part-time program. We typically advise fourth-year students to schedule their second practicum in the spring when possible, but there is some flexibility to work around your circumstances.

Question: Are there any course exemptions? As a former interpreter, I have taken courses on many of the enhanced topics offered.

Answer: We deal with situations like this on an individual basis. We typically don't have course exemptions, as it is unlikely that program applicants will have been doing teaching methodology in the exact same way that we teach it. However, applicants who are invited for an interview always have the opportunity to discuss their backgrounds and circumstances with us.

Question: Other than working in a school board, what opportunities are available for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing?

Answer: Our faculty will introduce you to many of the professional pathways available to program graduates, including those they have personal experience in. Examples include

home visiting positions, where you travel throughout the province to work with families in their homes, helping them with communication options, routines, language development, and teaching strategies both within and outside the home.

In mainstream settings, there are teacher of the deaf positions, and Ontario has three provincial schools of the deaf, where ASL is the language of instruction. Many of these schools also have consultants and/or resource departments, where roles such as home visiting positions are often housed. Other provinces may have additional roles as well.

Question: What helps applicants stand out during the application process? Are personal and work experience with deaf and hard-of-hearing people helpful?

Answer: Yes, absolutely. In addition to the previous responses about the kinds of things we look at, we are looking for strong, effective teachers. Work experience with deaf and hard-of-hearing students is a bonus, but there are lots of other kinds of experience that are valuable in an applicant.

The goal of the program is to build on what you already know about being an effective teacher. If someone has already demonstrated solid skills as a teacher for several years somewhere, and they now want to add this to their skill set, that's a very strong application, because you already have solid skills. A good teacher is a good teacher, and a good teacher teaching deaf kids is very effective.

Question: Are both practicum placements in a congregated class setting, or is one an itinerant teacher placement, where we would go from class to class or school to school?

Answer: Your placements depend on who you are and what your goal is at the end of the program. We look at each individual teacher candidate very carefully. We have meetings with you right at the beginning of the Teaching and Learning Seminar course so we can discuss what your goals are when you leave the program, and then we try to cater your practicum placements to who you are and the kids that you're aiming to teach.

Question: How has the program evolved over time to reflect the cultural expectations of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community?

Answer: The program has evolved significantly over the 30 years it has been at York University, reflecting changes in the educational context as deaf and hard-of-hearing education has changed. Change continues to accelerate in education, the DHoH

community, and the intersection of these areas, and our program aims to reflect those changes: in how and where students are educated, the shifting needs of the current cohort of deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and the changed landscape of education more broadly, particularly following COVID-19. We've shifted from a fully in-person, on-campus program to one that is now offered almost completely online, expanding our intake and making the program accessible to excellent teacher candidates from a wide range of backgrounds who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to bring their skills to this field.

Question: Do the two ASL courses have to be completed before you apply, or before you begin the program?

Answer: If you are in the process of completing your two ASL courses at the time that you are applying to the program, just let us know, and we will make a note to follow up on their status. You will have to complete both courses before you begin the program, but we recognize that sometimes people haven't quite finished their two courses by the time the deadline for applications closes in March.

Question: I've supplied in DHH classes where the classroom teachers have moved on to become itinerant teachers. Is this common?

Answer: In the mainstream setting, there are only a few school boards in Ontario that still have congregated classrooms. When the school board closes a congregated setting, the teacher of the deaf is still a teacher of the deaf, and the way that they service the children in the board would be through an itinerant position, which is why you see a lot of itinerant positions these days, because there are fewer congregated settings.

Alternatively, sometimes people are looking for a change. They may have worked in a congregated setting and are now looking to have a different opportunity in the role, spend more time with individual students, if the opportunity for both is in their school board.

Question: Can we do placements in other school boards, or does it have to be in the York boards?

Answer: We have students who join us from across the country, and wherever you live is where you will get your practicum placement. A teacher of the deaf should understand that they will never be working just outside their house; it is a job where you travel to where the

children are. That might mean a little bit of travel, even within your school board, or if you're working for the province within your district, but if you live, for example, in northern Ontario, we will be looking at the school boards in northern Ontario to provide you with an opportunity to practice with a mentor teacher in that area. If you work in southern Ontario, depending on which area you live in, we will try to find you a practicum placement in an area that's within a reasonable distance from your home.

The expectation would be that you are willing to travel if we can't find you something that's right near your home, but for the most part, we have great success finding placements at least within an hour commute, which is fairly standard for most people these days.

Question: Can we opt to do a placement in a different province?

Answer: If you are in Ontario, and you want to be a teacher and get your qualifications with the OCT, we suggest that you stay within Ontario. If you are in another province and you want to come to Ontario, we might be able to get you a practicum placement in Ontario. However, given that the role looks a little bit different in each province, if you want to work in a particular province and you live in a particular province, it would be best to complete your practicum placement in that province for your experience base.

Thank you for joining us this evening for our 2025 Information Night. Before we close, a reminder that the application package will be available on our program website **starting in mid-December**. Don't panic if you don't see it yet; it will be there before the winter break! You will then have until March 23, 2026 to submit the application. You now have an idea of what you can start thinking about to get ready for your application, which will give you plenty of time to complete and submit all your documents in the coming months.
