Deaf and Hard of Hearing Teacher Education Program

Q&A

November 5, 2026

Question: If I graduated three years ago and don't have my placement reports or practicum evaluations, what can I use for the application?

Answer: If you don't have your practicum evaluation reports from your BEd program, if you've been teaching anywhere between graduating and now, you can use any teaching evaluations or reports assessing your teaching, or a reference letter from someone who observed you teaching in that setting.

Question: What is involved in the application?

Answer: We have a detailed list of everything that is required for the application on our program website. Once the application is available in mid-December it might be more apparent, but even now there is a "How to Apply" link to show you what's required, even if the application isn't yet available to you. That will list all the materials you'll need to provide (transcripts, reference letters, proof of ASL courses, etc.) and in mid-December it will have a link to the application form that you'll need to fill out, with three short-answer/essay questions.

If you haven't had a chance to look out our website very closely yet, we encourage you to read through that. Outside of the specific section about the program application, if you scroll further down the page, we have lots of FAQ areas with questions that come up a lot, so it's a great resource. If you still have specific questions, you can email us directly at deafed@edu.yorku.ca.

Question: Are full-time students able to work part time, such as supply teaching?

Answer: The program runs from August to early May, so many full-time folks do things in May and June, such as picking up an LTO or supply teaching. While you're taking the program, in our experience, between the workload and the practicum, it's really quite challenging to take on supply teaching or any other kind of teaching during those eight months. The full-time program is truly full time. It's very doable, and we don't lose many people each year, but students will tell you that they're busy. So we wouldn't advise part-time work, but you do finish at the beginning of May, so you have that opportunity.

We have classes almost every day of the week, and it can keep you busy every day of the week, but you're adults, so if you feel like after you've been in the program for a few weeks and seen the lay of the land, and you want to pick up a day here or there, that's not totally unusual, but not an LTO or any kind of continuing arrangement. The days that you're not taking classes, you have assignments and other work to get done; it's not just coming to class. And you also need some time for yourself, for your mental health.

We never do lectures that are longer than two hours. Class time for an on-campus course at York is typically three hours, so for that third hour, instead of face-to-face communication, we usually have follow-up activities with reading or watching or participating online in some way, and then homework on top of that. There's some application to be done on your own, but it does need to be done for you to follow through with the learning each week.

Question: How many people do you accept in each stream, full time versus part time?

Answer: It's always a bit of a moving target, and there's no hard-and-fast rule. We have approximately 50 students in the program at any given time, and that's somewhere between 10-12 full-timers, and then 10-12 part-time people in each of year one, two, and three, plus any part-timers hanging around in year four or five. The new cohort that comes in is usually in the range of 18-20, which may be for example 8 full-timers and 10 part-timers. It's not hard and fast, but we have benchmarks that we won't go over, primarily because we don't have the capacity in practicum.

There are only so many placements available each year, and Melanie does a huge job with practicum arrangements, because deaf and hard-of-hearing students are a low-incidence group. It's a big deal for us, and they're what we care about, but when you go out in the system there aren't that many of them. Even in a school board as large as the TDSB there are only a thousand deaf and hard-of-hearing students, and that's by far the biggest group you'll see. Many boards might only have 50, so practicum placements are all over the place and they're not plentiful.

If we have too many students each year for practicum, we can't find placements for them, so that dictates a lot of our capacity. Each student that's enrolled in practicum is doing two placements, which means they need two individual mentor teachers, at least. Often, mentor teachers like to share that duty, so sometimes we use up four mentor teachers per teacher candidate.

Question: Will the ASL course from the Canadian Hearing Society or reputable program provide us with the skill set of ASL for this program?

Answer: It certainly will fulfill the requirement for one of the ASL [elective] courses, absolutely. However, to be clear, it does not make you fluent in ASL, and it would not be enough to pass the ASLPI to level three to take [the advanced elective] courses in ASL or to teach in ASL. For example, in the Bilingual Bicultural Education elective, you're learning how to teach in a setting where ASL is the language of instruction. A parallel analogy would be going to teach in a French school, with French as the language of instruction. You have to know the language to teach in it. But the CHS courses meet the [program entry] requirement for ASL courses, absolutely.

Question: Are the classes in the full-time program during the day? Can you give an example of the schedule?

Answer: They are during the day, for the most part. This year we are running one at 4:00 in the afternoon because we have a contract instructor who works during the day, but over the rest of the schedule, we usually start around 10 in the morning and finish by three in the afternoon. So the rest of your day is to yourself, to get ready for class and get your readings and work done.

We typically don't have classes on Monday, and some Mondays and Fridays are often used for observation days [for the practicum seminar course] and various other things. So those days aren't free, but they tend not to be booked up with classes. Classes tend to be heavier on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Question: Do you have some insight into the employment opportunities in the area for DHH educators?

Answer: Most of our students get employment in deaf and hard-of-hearing education. Maybe not always in their preferred location, it depends. Everybody has their own story about how they come to us; some folks are already working in a board and then stay in that board, and a position comes open as a teacher of the deaf, and they assume that position. There are people retiring from deaf and hard-of-hearing education roles as in everywhere in education.

There's also employment at the schools for the deaf, which are the primary location in the province where the language of instruction is ASL. If you're thinking about employment at

one of the provincial schools for the deaf, you would need to think about the fact that you need to be fluent in ASL to work there. There are regularly employment opportunities there.

For the school boards, if you're young and willing to move, there's always going to be a teacher of the deaf position. We have school boards asking all the time if we can send our graduates their way, but if you're ingrained in one particular area where you want to stay, sometimes it means you have to wait for some retirements. There are often many positions available in the boards as retirements are coming up.

Question: If I'm currently not working as a teacher but still in the education field, would I just use references from when I was teaching in the classroom? Does it matter if it's from a different province?

Answer: We really just want to know about people's experience working with you, and the experience that you have working with children. If someone can speak to those things, the reference in the field of education is great, wherever it comes from. Your reference letters are stronger and carry the most weight when they come from someone who can say something about your teacher practice, whether they taught. A colleague is great, but if it's your best friend who taught with you, that's fine, but better would be a principal or supervising officer, etc. You can think about the different people in education who could speak to your work as a teacher.

Question: Can you apply to both programs, part-time and full-time?

Answer: Absolutely. It gives you (and us) some flexibility, and it enhances your chances, if in your personal life you have the flexibility to attend as a full-time student, but would also be willing to take the program on a part-time basis, or vice versa. Just let us know that on your application.

Some years we have way more asking for part time than full time, and other years the opposite is also true. It depends on the year. If you're willing to go either way, you have a better chance of getting in.

If you're wondering why this matters, it goes back to practicum. Part-time students in year one don't need practicum placements. All the full-time students in year one need two practicum placements, and it's the third-year part-timers who need placements. So finding that balance for practicum impacts our intake year to year, and it's also influenced by previous years' intake ratios.

Question: When do you need to have level 3 equivalency for the ASL-based electives? How do the levels work if we completed ASL courses through Bob Rumball, e.g. 1A, 1B, 1C, etc.?

Answer: The Gallaudet University website has a page with video examples of what each ASLPI level of signing looks like. You can watch it and see, and you will be able to get a good sense yourself of how far away you are from a level 3. So if you're really close, and some targeted practice would help you attain that level 3, go for it. If it's a really distant target and you want to apply even as a part-time student, it's pretty hard to get up to that level unless you've got an opportunity to really use ASL regularly with others so your skill develops.

Just to be clear, the courses that you're going to take at CHS or Bob Rumball, no number of those courses are going to get you to the level where you're an ASLPI 3 without also being active in the community and practicing yourself. You can take all the courses that you like, but unless you're immersed in the language, there would be no way of achieving a level 3 on the ASLPI assessment tool.

That level three requirement [for the advanced ASL electives] was selected in consultation with Gallaudet University and other places with ASL as the language of instruction, to say what's the minimum amount of ASL fluency that's required for someone to be an effective teacher. This isn't about you learning ASL; we are not a "learn to sign" program. We are a "learn to teach deaf and hard-of-hearing students" program. You have to already come with the language [to teach in ASL]. Your ASL may improve while you're in the program, but if you want to do a practicum where ASL is the language of instruction or take those two enhanced course components that are taught in ASL, you have to evidence that ability to use the language.

This is not to say that you can't join the program if you don't have an ASLPI. You just need those two beginner courses to join the program, so that you have an understanding of the language and the community. And then you can focus on students who need support and access through technology and are learning spoken language. Which, in the current environment is the majority of students; that's just the reality of 2026.

Question: Do we have opportunities for placements within the community, e.g. early family teaching support, or is it just at schools?

Answer: York's Faculty of Education places BEd students in community settings, but we don't. Our practicum placements are always in schools, or sometimes home visiting. We connect with the resource services at the provincial schools branch and occasionally are

able to place students with the home visiting teachers, which would be in the community, in people's homes. This is because we, as teachers of the deaf, are qualified and work with children from early identification time at birth all the way until they leave us at the school, about age 21 for some students. So your qualifications allow you to have a practicum placement in settings that would be involved in teaching students from that age range, birth to 21 years of age. But the majority of the practicum placements are connected to local school boards and also provincial school settings, where there is a resource services department that may be doing home visiting that you could potentially be set up in. But there isn't anything other than that in terms of e.g. daycare settings or speech-language pathology settings, etc.

Question: If you are working on a TLA in a 0.5 DHH with the expectation to do the program, could you do an employment-based practicum?

Answer: If you're working as a teacher of the deaf, you could potentially complete one of your practicum placements in your place of employment. It always depends on the arrangement that we can make with your school board. It depends on the availability of a mentor teacher to support you in your work and in your job. However, we usually have great success working with school boards if they've already hired someone who's unqualified and has a teacher of the deaf position for at least one practicum placement, but not two.

Question: How successful are people with little ASL during their practicum?

Answer: [...] Most practicums don't require any ASL because they're in spoken English settings, where English is the language of instruction. There may be a little bit of sign involved, but it's sign that supports the spoken language. It's different from ASL, which you'll learn about in the program. So [having little ASL] would have no impact at all.

It has a huge impact if you want to work in a setting where ASL is the language of instruction, in which case it's very important. It's not as important if you're working in a mainstream setting or a congregated class within a mainstream school in a school board, because ASL would not be the language of instruction, English would be.

We would never put you in a practicum placement where you are not proficient in the language of instruction.

Question: Can someone do the full-time program from out of province? What is the cost of the program for out-of-province students?

Answer: The answer to the first question is absolutely yes. We have had people take the program full-time out of province because it's synchronously online. They just sometimes have to get up really early, or the time difference can make things a little challenging, but other than that, not a problem.

For details and specific questions about out-of-province tuition costs, for the sake of time during the live Q&A, please email us at deafed@edu.yorku.ca. For residents of Ontario, outside of course fees, textbooks, etc., the program is tuition free.

Question: Could you please give a preview of a day in the life of an itinerant teacher? How many students are in their caseload, and how often do they see their students?

Answer: It's different for every single itinerant teacher. Every caseload, every expectation of the board is different, and we don't dictate that. That's what the board hires you for, and they make those decisions for you. There are some itinerant teachers who do a lot less face-to-face teaching with direct-service students, and a lot more consultative activities and managing classroom amplification. At other boards, they have people within the board that do that stuff, and those itinerant teachers are working with direct-service students within a small area of the board, so they see up to 3-5 students in one day. So it really depends on where you live.

For example, I spent most of my career in Northern Ontario and spent a lot of my days driving between schools. I had a route at one point of 500 km one way to see students. So it really does depend on where you are in the province or country. We have students in northern parts of other provinces as well, and their experience is completely different from those in the TDSB. Being an itinerant teacher in the TDSB or Ottawa, for example, is a very different experience than being in a more rural and remote area, where there may be only one or two itinerant teachers of the deaf for the whole school board.

If you are admitted to the program, you'll begin to get a sense of that variation, and that helps you think about which enhanced course components you'll take as well, because some of them feed into the kind of job you might find yourself doing.

Question: Can I apply this year if I'm graduating with my BEd this coming spring? Do only newer teachers take this program, or do mid-career people take it as well?

Answer: Yes, you can apply if you are still completing your BEd, as long as you have it before the program starts in August. For our brand-new teacher candidates, we recommend that you apply for the full-time program.

We have many mid-career teacher candidates in our program. It's actually great if someone comes with a little bit of experience under their belt, because this program is about learning how to teach deaf and hard-of-hearing students on the back of what you already know about teaching typically hearing students. There are things that are the same and things that are different. So we really do value the experience that you bring to the program, especially for part-timers, because you're just a little bit more distant from us than the full-timers that we see regularly. So it's absolutely an advantage if you have experience.

Question: Are there certain enhanced course components (elective courses) that are more beneficial or useful than others? They all look interesting.

Answer: Once you're in the program, we can meet with you and chat about which things might be more advantageous to you, depending on where you see your career path going. If you're going to be an itinerant teacher in a remote and rural boards we mentioned, you do a lot of consultative work, and you have to manage the technology for a whole host of kids. So we definitely advise you to take the Classroom Amplification course, because that teaches you that work. If you see yourself going to a school for the deaf to teach, then the Bilingual Bicultural Education enhanced course component would be tailor-made for you, because it's talking about teacher practice in that setting.

Once you're in the program, you'll start to see, based on where your interests lie, where your potential job opportunities are, and what the people that hire you are looking for. For example, a posting will go up, and you'll go to the interview and find out that what they really want to know is, do you know how to handle the technology? They need someone who's going to take over running around from school to school troubleshooting, and if you aren't up to date on the most recent Phonak, RM systems, etc., then they don't want you. That may be a board that doesn't have someone separately hired for that position.

So it depends exactly where you're going. Some boards have one teacher of the deaf, some boards have five or six, and some boards have 20 or 40. If you're in a board with one or two teachers of the deaf, you are kind of a jack of all trades, and you're going to have to know how to do all kinds of things. The technology will fall into your lap, with fixing and looking at hearing aids, deciding for claims, applying for funding for your students, IEP writing, collaborating with your colleagues in the general education system. It really depends where you find yourself.