I. Misconduct Disclosure

Students are expected to abide by the Georgia Southern University Student Conduct Code and to disclose any failure to do so. If a case has been brought to the University’s Judicial Affairs office, the student’s advisor and department chair should be informed. If Judicial Affairs rules in favor of the student, then no negative action should occur at the program level. However, if Judicial Affairs rules against the student, the program should have a process in place for determining if the student should be prevented from continuing in the program. If a student is excluded from the program as a result of the misconduct, the student may appeal to the College of Graduate Studies (see link for steps involved in the appeals process: http://cogs.georgiasouthern.edu/students/forms/graduate-student-academic-appeal/).

II. Criminal Background Check

It is required that all students admitted to educator preparation programs at Georgia Southern University submit to a criminal background check. To do so, they are directed to the following site CastleBranch.com and click on “Applicants.” We provide them with the Georgia Southern University Package Code, which is ge00. A release form, which allows Georgia Southern to receive a student’s information, is required by CastleBranch.com and obtainable from their site. The cost is $33 for in-state applicants and an additional $13.50 for out-of-state applicants, payable by credit card (Visa or MasterCard) or money order; later rechecks, required every two years, cost $15 each.

Procedures:
1. Applicants complete the “COE Disclosure and Affirmation” statements as part of the application to the program.
2. Program designee checks that background check requirement is met as part of admission decision. The requirement is met if the background check has been completed through CastleBranch.com.
3. The COE’s Graduate Academic Services Center director will check the CastleBranch.com site on a daily basis and, if a negative finding occurs on an applicant, she will notify the COE associate dean for graduate education and research.
4. If a negative finding occurs, the director will then send a letter to the student (using an approved template) to notify him/her of the finding and provide information and instructions, with a copy sent to the program coordinator. The student will be instructed to contact the COE associate dean for graduate education and research to discuss options.
5. If a negative finding has occurred on a student and the student is being placed in a field placement, the graduate program coordinator, advisor, or course instructor (as determined by the program) will share the background check information with the administration of the host school/system or agency in advance so they can make an informed decision as to whether to allow the placement or not. A letter to the school/system/agency administrator/s (using an approved template) will be mailed (or emailed) with the CastleBranch.com findings. The program will send the letter. [Note: The program must have a system in place for assuring that the letters will be sent to administrators of field placement sites in these cases. This may be done by the program coordinator, advisor, or instructor or by the COE’s Graduate Academic Services Center director, if a system is arranged in advance and adequate information is provided. The program will identify those courses that require field experiences to assist in this process.] The administrator will sign and return the form acknowledging receipt of the information and indicating the placement decision. The decision to accept the student for the placement will be at the sole discretion of the school system/agency administration. A copy of the signed form from the school/system/agency administrator should be maintained in the student’s advisement folder.
6. For graduate students who satisfied the background check requirement through CastleBranch.com and do not complete their programs within a two-year period, a recheck is required (every two years). The COE’s Graduate Academic Services Center director will maintain a spreadsheet that identifies when graduate students completed the background check with CastleBranch.com and will notify the graduate students by e-mail and their advisors when a recheck is due. Cost of rechecks with CastleBranch.com is $15. It is the responsibility of the program faculty to ensure that all graduate students placed in field experiences are up-to-date with the background check and that school/agency administrators are properly notified if an adverse finding occurs. Assistance is available to programs through the COE’s Graduate Academic Services Center director.

Please be aware that admission to the program and/or field placements will have no effect as to whether the Professional Standards Commission will certify an individual. The Professional Standards Commission makes certification decisions without regard to prior criminal background check evaluations by an educational institution. School districts conduct and evaluate criminal background checks prior to hiring.

III. Code of Ethics for Educators

As part of the admissions process (on the “COE Disclosure and Affirmation” statements), students are provided initial information about the Georgia PSC Code of Ethics for Educators requirement and are referred to the site http://www.gapscc.com/Ethics/CodeOfEthics.aspx. Students are told that this code of ethics is binding on all certified personnel employed in the State of Georgia and are also binding on all persons in programs that prepare educators for work.
in schools. They are informed that the COE expects all of its candidates (graduate and undergraduate) to abide by this professional code of ethics. All applicants are then expected to read the *Code of Ethics for Educators* and agree to apply the standards in the performance of their professional responsibilities while in the program and affirm that they will do so. This is documented on the “COE Disclosure and Affirmation” statements completed with the application.

**IV. Tort Liability Insurance**

Students are informed as part of the admissions process (with the “COE Disclosure and Affirmation” statements that are part of the application) of the requirement to have tort liability insurance due to the required field experiences in our programs (including practica, internships, and field-based research). They are told that this insurance coverage is available through membership in professional organizations and their student organization affiliates such as PAGE/SPAGE and GAE/SGAE or through private homeowner’s insurance policies. The “COE Disclosure and Affirmation” statements that are part of the application require students to indicate the source of their liability insurance coverage. Students are also informed on this form that tort liability insurance coverage must be in effect before enrollment in any course that requires a field experience or field-based research. Programs should reinforce this requirement at the time field placements are made.

**V. Georgia Educator Ethics Assessments**

Many programs in the COE require completion of these assessments at both entry and exit points during the course of the program. Consult the specific program requirements in the Georgia Southern University graduate catalog.

*Document revised 7/2016*