Essential abilities are academic performance requirements that refer to those physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the teacher education curriculum and the development of personal attributes required for professional licensure. The candidate must possess or be able to gain these abilities with or without reasonable accommodation.

The essential abilities required by the curriculum are reflected by competencies in the following areas: communication, intellectual, behavioral, social, motor, and sensory. Below are attributes in all areas that each teacher candidate must possess.

Communication competencies: The candidate demonstrates communication competencies by such behaviors as using appropriate grammar, syntax, inflection, and vocabulary in spoken and written expression. The professional candidate speaks distinctly with confidence, uses correct spelling, and mechanics of English. The candidate must use professional language and refrain from using inappropriate cultural slang. Further communication with P-12 students and families is demonstrated by sensitivity to the situation and family circumstances of their P-12 students.

The candidate must have the cognitive abilities necessary to master relevant content in subjects commonly taught in P-12 schools and pedagogical principles and their application in field settings at a level deemed appropriate by the faculty. These skills may be described as the ability to comprehend, memorize, analyze, and synthesize material. The candidate must be able to develop reasoning and decision-making skills appropriate to the practice of teaching.

Intellectual competencies: Additionally, the candidate must be able to demonstrate the following knowledge and skills:

1. Understands the ethical and moral complexities of schooling and has developed a valued position in relation to ethical and moral issues.
2. Understands the social/political dimensions of schooling.
3. Understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry and structures of the disciplines, and creates learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.
4. Understands how children learn and develop and provides learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and physical development.
5. Understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
6. Understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students’ development of conceptual understanding of various subject areas through critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
7. Uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create learning environments that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
8. Uses knowledge of effective verbal and nonverbal communication techniques and makes appropriate use of educational technology to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
9. Plans instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
10. Understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.

11. Fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students’ learning and well being.

12. Understands issues of diversity and multiculturalism and applies understanding to education decisions.

13. Continually reflects on and evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals) and actively seeks opportunities to grow professionally.

**Behavioral and Social (Dispositions):** The candidate meets the requirement for dispositions by demonstrating such behaviors as fully participating in class and field settings, completing assignments and responsibilities on time, and seeking assistance from instructors and faculty when appropriate. Additional professional behaviors include prioritizing responsibilities, demonstrating openness to new ideas, being willing to accept constructive criticism and using that criticism to improve performance, taking initiative, using good judgment, demonstrating poise and flexibility, and displaying a positive and enthusiastic attitude.

Behavioral and social attributes are demonstrated by such behaviors as developing positive relationships with peers and education professionals, treating individuals with respect, using tact and discretion, and setting a positive and respectful tone in interactions with others. These behaviors are exhibited by actively listening to other’s viewpoints, recognizing own strengths and weaknesses and responding appropriately, perceiving a wide range of interpersonal cues from others and responding appropriately, and working effectively in groups.

The candidate must possess the emotional maturity and stability to function effectively under stress that is inherent in education and to adapt to circumstances, which are unpredictable or that may change rapidly. He/she must interact productively, cooperatively and in a collegial manner with individuals of differing personalities and backgrounds, and be an active contributor to the process of providing educational experience by demonstrating the ability to engage in teamwork and team building. He/she must demonstrate the ability to identify and set classroom priorities. The candidate must be punctual and perform work in a timely manner.

**Physical and Sensory:** Additional attributes necessary for the teaching profession include compassion, empathy, integrity, responsibility, a sense of justice, and the physical capacity to handle the necessary demands of the job. Physical attributes include adequate physical stamina and energy to carry out the responsibilities of teaching over long hours and sensory abilities to support the assessment and classroom management responsibilities of the profession.

**Evaluation:** The essential abilities of teacher education are the basis for the requirements for admission, retention, and graduation of applicants of the teacher education programs at the University of North Dakota. Evaluation and assessment of the candidate’s performance in each of these characteristics is an ongoing process. Field experiences are often the critical junctures in the program when the essential abilities of the candidate may be challenged. Completion of a successful field experience is required for admission to the programs. In addition, several field experiences that carry hierarchical expectations for successful completion are required throughout the programs. Data is gathered from university based faculty as well as faculty in the public schools from the point of admission throughout their teacher education program. The information is shared with the candidate on a regular basis and used to support their professional development.