

# Online Application for Admission to the Teacher Preparation Program

## Essay Questions, Sample Essay and Scoring Guide

MSU's teacher preparation program seeks teacher candidates with personal characteristics such as these:

- Curiosity about and appreciation of other people's cultures and/or perspectives
- Persistence in the face of challenges and/or obstacles
- Motivation to learn and willingness to take intellectual risks
- Willingness to engage in issues of fairness (equity)
- Courage to take principled stands even when others disagree
- Tolerance for uncertainty and willingness to withhold judgment while gathering more information and gaining insight

When you are at the testing site and ready to begin writing your essay, you will receive a question containing one of these six characteristics (randomly generated by the system). The question will ask you to tell us how this characteristic has (a) influenced your decision to become a teacher and/or (b) will contribute to your effectiveness as a teacher. Please approach this by telling a story about an incident or event *in your life* that illustrates that particular characteristic.

The essay you write will be evaluated on the basis of how well you address the question and your skill at organizing, developing, and conveying, in standard written English, an event or story that illustrates how you have demonstrated (or perhaps observed) the characteristic in your life (see the Scoring Guide below). You must clearly connect your answer to the question.

For example, you could receive the following question.

*We are interested in learning about your goal to become a teacher. Please tell us how your:*

*Persistence in the face of challenges and/or obstacles*

1. *Has influenced your decision to become a teacher, and/or*
2. *Will contribute to your effectiveness as a teacher*

It must be evident that your answer explicitly addresses this question. For example, your answer might look something like this ...

*When I was in high school, mastering algebra was very difficult for me. Because I wanted to attend college and become a teacher, my goal was to learn the concepts and earn a grade of B or better.*

*The steps I had to take to reach this goal included ...*

*The obstacles I had to overcome to reach this goal included ...*

*The sacrifices I had to make to reach this goal included ...*

*All the hard work and sacrifice paid off when at the end of the semester I felt I had really learned the material and I earned a grade of B+! This experience of persisting in the face of challenges or obstacles will contribute to my effectiveness as a teacher because now I really understand how it feels to be a student struggling to learn material that is difficult ... and also how good it feels to succeed. Remembering my experience with algebra will inspire me to search for alternative ways of teaching material to students who are having difficulty. Based on my experience, I will be able to encourage students to persist in the face of challenges in order to reach their goals.*

Please notice how the sample answer directly addresses the question.

## Essay Scoring Guide

The essay will be rated using a focused, holistic scoring rubric in which the criteria are considered together on a single descriptive scale. Scorers will rate the overall quality of the essay using the following scale:

**EXCEPTIONAL.** These essays take the characteristic in the prompt and provide extensive elaboration of an event that is pertinent, clear, and detailed. Explicit connections between the event and the characteristic it is intended to illustrate are logical and go beyond platitudes and superficial relationships. Organization is clear, coherent, and logically sequenced. These essays display outstanding and consistent facility in the use of language with no mechanical errors. They also demonstrate syntactic variety and appropriate word choice.

**SUPERIOR.** These essays take the characteristic in the prompt and provide moderate elaboration of an event that is pertinent, clear, and detailed. Generally, explicit connections between the event and the characteristic it is intended to illustrate are evident and some depth is provided. Organization is at least clear and reasonably sequenced. These essays display adequate facility in the use of language, though they may have one or two mechanical errors, and demonstrate at least some syntactic variety and range of vocabulary.

**COMPETENT.** These essays take the characteristic in the prompt and provide some elaboration of an event that is pertinent with at least some detail. Connections are made between the event and the characteristic it is intended to illustrate, but they may be questionable or implicit. Organization is at least generally clear with adequate, but possibly inconsistent, facility in the use of language and perhaps a few mechanical errors that don't seriously affect readability. These essays demonstrate at least some syntactic variety and range of vocabulary.

**ADEQUATE.** These essays consider the characteristic in the prompt but provide little elaboration of an event that is pertinent. Connections between the event and the characteristic it is intended to illustrate are insufficient or superficial. Organization is satisfactory, but inconsistent facility in the use of language and a few surface errors that don't seriously affect readability may be present. These essays demonstrate at least some syntactic variety and range of vocabulary.

**WEAK.** These essays consider the characteristic in the prompt, but the connection between the event and the characteristic is insufficient and/or superficial. The description of the connection

contains irrelevant information with few relevant details. These essays display serious disorganization and/or underdevelopment. Unsatisfactory facility in the use of language is evident as well as serious and frequent errors in sentence structure and usage.

**INADEQUATE.** These essays show a failure to consider the characteristic in the prompt, lack an event or incident, and fail to show connections. Problems related to organization and/or the use of language are severe enough to make the writer's ideas difficult to follow.