
3A

Action

Professional Services Committee

Proposed Adoption of Revised Experimental Program Standards

Executive Summary: This item presents the proposed revised Experimental Program Standards for adoption.

Recommended Action: That the Commission adopt the proposed revised Experimental Program Standards.

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Strategic Plan Goal: 1

Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation and performance of professional educators for the accreditation of credential programs.

March 2008

Proposed Adoption of Revised Experimental Program Standards

Introduction

This item presents the revised Experimental Program Standards to the Commission for adoption. The proposed standards were presented to the Commission for initial consideration at the August 2007 Commission meeting. Following that meeting, staff released the draft revised standards for stakeholder feedback. Input from the field was shared with the Committee on Accreditation (COA) as were questions and concerns from Commissioners. The proposed standards included in this agenda item reflect changes incorporated as a result of these comments.

Background

The experimental program option is designed to encourage innovations in educator preparation and investigation of those innovations, with the aim of increasing the understanding of professional learning and improving professional practice for the benefit of all students in California. Experimental programs were provided for in Education Code 44273 (a) as a way for programs of “merit and the potential of improving the quality of service authorized by the credential” to be developed. The current Experimental Program Standards were adopted by the Commission in 1986 and since that time there have been fewer than 30 experimental programs approved.

Development of the Revised Experimental Program Standards

As the COA and the Accreditation Study Work Group (Work Group) reviewed and proposed revisions to the Commission’s accreditation system, they discussed the Experimental Program option. Three points were of major interest: 1) the underutilization of this option in the past; 2) a need to update the standards to reflect current best practices in research-based program design and assessment; and 3) a need to clarify Commission and COA processes and procedures with respect to Experimental Programs. There was significant interest in both revising the Experimental Program Standards and reinvigorating field interest in Experimental Programs in order to contribute to the body of knowledge in the area of educator preparation. Consensus was reached that a revision of the standards was necessary to reflect current best practices of research-based program design and assessment as well as clarification of Commission and COA processes and procedures with respect to Experimental Programs.

A subgroup of COA and Work Group members met a number of times to review and suggest revisions to the current Experimental Program Standards. The draft revised standards were discussed by the COA and the group revised the draft standards based on the COA’s feedback. At the June 2007 COA meeting, the COA requested that staff bring the revised draft experimental program standards to the Commission for consideration. The draft standards were initially presented to the Commission for information at the August 2007 meeting and subsequently posted on the Commission’s website for field comment.

The COA and Work Group agreed early in the process that it is essential that candidates completing an experimental program have the same knowledge, skills and abilities as candidates who complete a program operating under the adopted program standards. The institution/program sponsor is responsible for proposing an experimental research design as well as a program design that together indicate a high likelihood of producing candidates with the appropriate knowledge, skills and abilities as well as of contributing to the knowledge base within the education profession. The COA will approve only those experimental programs that have completed the peer review process and demonstrate a high possibility of meeting both goals—preparing qualified candidates and contributing to the professional knowledge base relating to the preparation of California educators.

Included with the draft revised experimental standards in this agenda item are both a rationale for experimental programs in general and proposed procedures for submitting an experimental program. These are included as Appendix A. In addition, Appendix B provides the policy principles underlying the 2008 redesign of the Experimental Program Standards.

Although field comment received was minimal, Commission staff and the COA has revised the standards to address both the questions raised by the Commission at the August 2007 meeting and other issues raised by the members of the Committee as they discussed this topic further at their January 2008 meeting. One of the areas of concern raised by the Commission related to the duration of time that a program may be considered an experimental program. This question was subsequently discussed by the COA and, as a result, the standards have been revised to indicate that a time limit will be needed as part of the proposal and that no experimental program may exceed 7 years. Among the changes to the procedures related to Experimental Standards was a clarification that programs must submit proposals that address the Preconditions as well as the Common Standards and the Experimental Program Standards. In addition, the revised procedures discussed in this agenda item include a requirement that all experimental programs must provide the COA with a midpoint progress report to help ensure sufficient oversight of these programs. Finally, clarification was made in the procedures that the final evaluation of the program must include next steps for the program, including plans for dissemination of program evaluation results, thereby allowing the Committee on Accreditation the opportunity to discuss the future of the program after its completion as an experimental program.

Staff wishes to thank members of the subcommittee for contributing their time and expertise in developing the proposed revised standards as well as their dedication in addressing this topic.

Next Steps

Should the Commission approve the Experimental Program Standards, the approved standards would be posted on the website, the field would be notified of them through a coded correspondence and through the PSD E-News, and prospective program sponsors may begin immediately to submit proposals for review. In addition, announcements of the new standards and the availability of program applications will be made at professional conferences such as California Council for Teacher Education. In addition, technical assistance meetings for possible sponsors of experimental programs will also be planned.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission adopt the proposed revised Experimental Program Standards.

Appendix A

Proposed Revised Experimental Program Standards

Appendix A

Experimental Program Standards for Educator Preparation

Rationale for Experimental Programs

The experimental program option is designed to encourage innovations in educator preparation and investigation of those innovations, with the aim of increasing the profession's understanding of professional learning and improving professional practice for the benefit of all students in California. Experimental programs were provided for in Education Code 44273(a) as a way for programs of "merit and the potential of improving the quality of service authorized by the credential" to be developed. In the past, few programs have been submitted under this option. The revised Experimental Program standards take into account this under-utilization and are designed to encourage innovation with accountability to the profession.

Experimental programs can be proposed and are encouraged in any credential area. There is a need for high quality educators who serve in leadership and support roles to promote and facilitate learning for all students, as well as, for classroom teachers.

Institutions and/or program sponsors are particularly encouraged to develop proposals for experimental programs to address the following specific needs in California: (a) the need for quality teachers in low performing schools, and/or those serving large numbers of minority students, low-income students, and English language learners; (b) critical needs for teachers in specific areas, such as math and science; and (c) the need for highly qualified teachers given the expected future teacher shortage.

California's educator work force is prone to fluctuation and change. There will always be a need for highly qualified and effective educators. Institutions or program sponsors are encouraged to develop experimental programs, incorporating innovative and new ways designed to attract individuals to the profession and prepare highly qualified educators to meet the needs of California's public school students.

In general, experimental program options should be designed with the aim of improving educator preparation and professional practice for the benefit of all educators and students in California's schools. Program improvement should be an ongoing professional process whereby programs develop, implement and investigate preparation approaches informed by the latest research and literature. The results of these investigations should then be disseminated within the professional and the policy arena to encourage, as appropriate, broader use and adaptation to current practice.

Goals for Experimental Programs

The goals for experimental programs include the following:

1. As with all other Commission program completers, experimental program completers have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities as identified by the Commission's candidate competence standards to teach and support student learning for all children in California public schools.
2. Program completers can, through their practice, meet the needs of populations that have been underserved and contribute to the success of all students (including meeting the needs of English language learners and/or helping to close the achievement gap).

3. Experimental programs contribute to the construction of new knowledge and scholarship on educator preparation to improve student learning.

Proposed Revised Experimental Program Standards

Standard 1: Program Rationale

The experimental program proposal provides a credible rationale for the program, drawing upon relevant and recent scholarly and research literature in the field. Experimental programs have a scholarly focus and proposals are research-based with a clear plan for investigating an issue of significant importance for the theory and practice of educator preparation.

Standard 2: Research Question(s)

The proposal clearly identifies the topic of investigation and submits one or more research questions, hypotheses or objectives that the experimental program is expected to address. The proposal relates to fundamentally significant issues in the selection, preparation and/or assessment of prospective professional educators.

Standard 3: Program Design

The proposal submits a complete and thorough description of the proposed program. The proposal includes details of the activities and coursework that candidates will complete as well as indicators of outcomes of candidate competence for program completion. The proposal must outline all essential elements of the research design, as appropriate to the nature of the inquiry. This includes the intended outcomes and evidence that will be collected.

Standard 4: Research Design

The proposal clearly illustrates the connection of the Program Philosophy and Goals, Research Questions and Program Design to the implementation of the experimental program and investigation of the issue(s) being investigated as well as a timeline for the investigation. Standards of scholarship will be applied as part of the peer and staff review used to approve, monitor and review proposals and reports. The length of time for the experimental program is provided and is appropriate to the focus of the inquiry but may not exceed 7 years.

Standard 5: Anticipated Outcomes

The proposal identifies the anticipated outcomes of implementing the experimental program and how the implementation and investigation will add to the knowledge base of educator preparation. The proposal includes details about how the efficacy of the program will be assessed and how the program will ensure that program completers have the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to work in California's diverse public schools and support students in meeting standards.

Standard 6: Contribution to Scholarship and the Profession

The proposal clearly shows that the knowledge generated by implementing the experimental program will improve the quality of preparation for service authorized by the credential. The program and the scholarship generated from the research should lead or have the potential to lead to improvements in the preparation of professionals and guide education policy.

Procedures for Submitting an Experimental Program for Commission Approval

An experimental program can be developed and submitted at any time in the seven year accreditation cycle. Once approved, the program is incorporated into the institution/program sponsor's accreditation cohort activities.

- Institution or program sponsor identifies an issue, question, or problem that can be addressed through a preparation program that varies from the Commission's adopted program standards.
- Institution or program sponsor submits a 3-5 page paper describing the issue, question, or problem to the Commission.
- Staff reviews the proposal brief and provides technical assistance to the institution or program sponsor in developing the full program proposal. Staff reports to the Committee information regarding possible proposals.
- Institution or program sponsor submits the full proposal, addressing the Preconditions, Common Standards, and Standards for Experimental Programs.
- Program proposal is reviewed by a panel of educators (peer review). Reviewers may ask for additional information if the proposal does not initially meet the Experimental Program Standards.
- Program goes to the Committee on Accreditation for approval once the reviewers agree that the proposal meets the Experimental Program Standards.

Procedures for Implementing an Experimental Program

- Program begins implementation.
- Program participates in all accreditation activities in concert with the institution or program sponsors schedule.
- Program submits biennial reports focused on measures of candidate competence and an additional section focused on the evaluation, to date, of the experimental program.
- Program provides the Committee on Accreditation with a status report on the progress of the program half-way through the proposed timeline for the program.
- Program participates in Program Assessment according to the accreditation system.
- Candidates, graduates, faculty, and employers from the program participate in the site review activities as scheduled.
- Staff reviews biennial and evaluation reports. Recommendations for program continuance or interventions will be made to the Committee on Accreditation.
- Program submits a final evaluation of the program to the Committee on Accreditation, according to the approved Research Design, including next steps and plans for dissemination of program evaluation results to appropriate audiences (other California educator preparation programs, professional organization conferences, and journal articles, for example).

Appendix B

Policy Principles Underlying the 2008 Redesign of the Experimental Program Standards

Appendix B

Policy Principles Underlying the 2008 Redesign of Experimental Program Standards

The following principles represent Commission guidelines related to the proposal, review and evaluation of Experimental Programs.

1. The Commission encourages experimental programs that seek to resolve significant questions regarding educator preparation. Experimental programs must have a scholarly focus, and proposals must be research-based and clearly identify the issue being investigated, the intended outcomes and the evidence that will be collected, analyzed and used for program improvement.
2. Colleges, universities and school district educator preparation programs are encouraged to develop experimental programs that depart from the Commission's program standards for traditional programs if the proposed program meets the goals of the statement above. The Common Standards will apply to all proposals and submissions—both traditional and experimental.
3. The Committee on Accreditation will approve experimental programs that adhere to the experimental program standards, including indicators of candidate competence and how they will be assessed. As part of this process, the institution/program sponsor must describe how it will investigate and evaluate the experimental program. Biennial reports of research findings will be required as a part of the accreditation cycle. Experimental programs will be approved providing they have the potential to improve the quality of service authorized by the credential as required by Education Code.
4. An experimental program proposal will be determined to have merit based upon an analysis of its proposed design to address fundamental issues in schooling in California and preparing educators for those settings.
5. Experimental programs will be evaluated based upon the proposal and the data collected related to program quality and candidate competence. The potential for improving the quality of service authorized by the credential will be determined on the basis of analysis of the indicators of program effectiveness that the institution/program sponsor submits as part of its program proposal.
6. Each experimental program submits a final report to the Committee. The Committee on Accreditation hears the reports on results of Experimental Programs and innovations. The Committee may recommend to the Commission a review of Program Standards based on data and scholarship regarding educator preparation reported by Experimental Programs.