

Chapter Three

Institutional and Program Approval

Introduction

This chapter describes the processes by which an institution gains initial institutional approval from the CTC that allows the institution to propose specific credential preparation programs for approval by the COA. This chapter also provides information about the different status options that a program might have, such as being approved, inactive, discontinued, or withdrawn.

I. Initial Institutional Approval

According to the *Accreditation Framework* (Section 1-B-1), the CTC is responsible for determining the eligibility of an institution that applies for initial accreditation and that has not previously prepared educators for state certification in California. The following procedures apply to those institutions:

- A. The institution prepares a complete program proposal, responding to all preconditions, Common Standards and appropriate program standards. The proposal will be considered the application for accreditation as well as the application for credential preparation program approval.
- B. Initial Accreditation is a two-stage process:
 - 1. The proposal will be reviewed for compliance with the appropriate institutional preconditions and for alignment with the Common Standards, both of which can be found at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/program-standards.html>.
 - 2. If the proposal meets the CTC's eligibility requirements as judged by trained reviewers, the institution will be recommended for initial institutional approval to the CTC which will consider the recommendation and take action.
 - 3. If the CTC acts favorably on the proposal, the proposal will be forwarded to the COA for program accreditation action according to adopted procedures.
- C. Once granted initial accreditation, the institution will then come under the continuing accreditation procedures adopted by the COA.

II. Initial Accreditation of Programs

According to the *Accreditation Framework* (Section 2-A-2), the COA is responsible for granting initial accreditation to new programs of educator preparation. If the COA determines that a program meets all applicable standards, the COA grants initial accreditation to the program. New credential program proposals by eligible institutions

must fulfill preconditions established by state law and the CTC. They must also fulfill the Common Standards and one of the program standards options listed in Section 3 of the *Framework*: Option 1, California Program Standards; Option 2, National or Professional Program Standards; or Option 3, Experimental Program Standards.

Section 4-B of the *Framework* contains the Policies for Initial Accreditation of Programs. Prior to being presented to the COA for action, new programs proposed by eligible institutions must go through Initial Program Review (IPR). During IPR, new program proposals are reviewed by panels of external experts, and occasionally by CTC staff with expertise in the credential area. During IPR, new programs are reviewed in relation to the preconditions, Common Standards or Common Standards Addendum and the selected program standards. The COA considers recommendations by the external review panels and CTC staff when deciding on the accreditation of each proposed program.

An institution that selects National or Professional Program Standards (Option 2) should consult the chapter on National or Professional Standards for appropriate procedures. The acceptability of the standards should be assured before the institution prepares a program proposal. An institution may choose to submit a program that meets the Experimental Program Standards (Option 3) adopted by the CTC when the program is designed to investigate professional preparation issues or policy questions related to the preparation of credential candidates.

Program Submission and Implementation: Basic Steps in the Accreditation of New Programs

There are several steps that must be followed by the CTC, its staff, and the COA during the process of reviewing proposals from institutions and agencies wishing to sponsor educator preparation programs.

1. Preliminary Staff Review

Before submitting program proposals for formal review and initial accreditation, institutions are encouraged to request preliminary reviews of *draft* proposals by the CTC's professional staff. The purpose of these reviews is to assist institutions in developing programs that are consistent with the intent and scope of the standards, and that will be logical and clear to the external reviewers. Program proposals may be submitted for preliminary staff review at any time. Institutions are encouraged to discuss the potential timeframe for such a review with CTC staff. Preliminary review is voluntary.

2. Review of Preconditions

Preconditions are requirements necessary to operate a program leading to an educator preparation license in California. They are based on state laws and regulations and do not involve issues of program quality. An institution's response to the preconditions is reviewed by the CTC's professional staff. At the institution's discretion, preconditions may be reviewed either during the

preliminary review stage, or after the institution's formal submission of a proposal. If staff determines that the program complies with the requirements of state laws and administrative regulations, the program is eligible for a further review of the standards by staff or a review panel. If the program does not comply with the preconditions, the proposal is returned to the institution with specific information about the lack of compliance. Such a program may be resubmitted once the compliance issues have been resolved.

3. Initial Program Review (IPR)

Unlike the preconditions, the Common Standards or Common Standards Addendum and program standards address issues of program quality and effectiveness. The institution's formal response to the Common Standards or Common Standards Addendum and program standards are reviewed by panel of experts in the field of preparation or by CTC staff. During the Initial Program Review process, there is opportunity for institutional representatives to confer with staff consultants to answer questions or clarify issues that may arise.

If staff or the review panel determines that a proposed program fulfills the standards, the program is recommended for initial accreditation by the COA at one of its regular meetings. Action by the COA is communicated to the institution in writing.

If staff or the review panel determines that the program does not meet the standards, the proposal is returned to the institution with an explanation of the findings. Specific reasons for the decision are communicated to the institution. Representatives of the institution can obtain information and assistance from the CTC's staff. After changes have been made in the program, the proposal may be submitted for re-consideration.

Appeal of an Adverse Decision

There are two levels of appeal of an adverse decision. The first is an appeal of a decision by CTC staff, or its review panel, that the preconditions or relevant program standards were not satisfied and that the proposal should not be forwarded to the COA for action. This appeal is directed to the COA.

The second is an appeal of an adverse decision by the COA. This appeal is directed to the Executive Director of the CTC.

If a program is not recommended to the COA for approval by staff or the review panel, the institution may submit a formal request to place that program on the agenda of the COA for consideration. In so doing, the institution must provide the following information:

- The original program proposal and the rationale for the adverse decision provided by the CTC's staff or review panel.
- Copies of any responses by the institution to requests for additional information from CTC's staff or review panel, including a copy of any resubmitted proposal (if it was resubmitted).
- A rationale for the institution's request.

The COA will review the information and do one of the following:

- Grant initial accreditation to the program.
- Request a new review of the institution's program proposal by a different CTC staff member or a different review panel.
- Deny initial accreditation to the program.

Within twenty business days of the COA's decision to deny initial accreditation, the institution may submit evidence to the Executive Director of the CTC that the decision made by the COA was arbitrary, capricious, unfair, or contrary to the policies of the *Accreditation Framework* or the procedural guidelines of the COA. (Information related to the quality of the program that was not previously presented to the CTC's staff or the review panel may not be considered by the CTC.) The Executive Director will determine whether the evidence submitted by the institution responds to the criteria for appeal. If it does, the Executive Director will forward the appeal to the CTC. If it does not, the institution will be notified of the decision and provided with information describing how the information does not respond to the criteria. The institution will be given ten business days to re-submit the appeal to the Executive Director.

The appeal, if forwarded to the CTC by the Executive Director, will be heard before the Professional Services Committee of the CTC. The Professional Services Committee will consider the written evidence provided by the institution and a written response from the COA. In resolving the appeal, the CTC will take one of the following actions:

- Sustain the decision of the COA to deny initial accreditation to the program.
- Overturn the decision of the COA and grant initial accreditation to the program.

The Executive Director communicates the CTC's decision to the COA and the institution.

III. Program Status for Approved Programs

Once a program has been accredited by the COA, it will be considered an approved program. As conditions change, however, it is sometimes necessary for programs to be granted either the inactive status or to be withdrawn by the institution. Institutions are responsible to initiate either a change from approved-active to approved-inactive or withdrawn.

The chart below illustrates the operational differences in the three possible status options followed by more specific information on each.

| Institution/Program Sponsor | Program Approval Status | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------|
| | Withdrawn | Inactive | Active |
| May Accept New Candidates | No | No | Yes |
| May Recommend Candidates for a Credential | Only those already in the program | Only those already in the program | Yes |
| Participates in Biennial Reports | No | Modified | Yes |
| Participates in Program Assessment | No | Modified | Yes |
| Participates in Site Visit | No | Modified | Yes |
| How to Request Reinstatement | New Program Document Submitted and reviewed by panel members | Letter to the COA Requesting Re-activation* | NA |

*See a description of the Re-activation process below. If the CTC adopted revised program standards while the program is in inactive status, a new program document will be required to re-activate a program.

Approved Programs

Already Approved Program Sponsors Authorized to Offer California Credentials

Approved programs participate in all activities in the accreditation cycle in accordance with their assigned cohort. The accreditation cycle takes seven years to complete and all activities are essential for on-going accreditation of all approved programs. The annual cycle of activities is consistent with the premise that credential preparation programs engage in annual data collection and analyses to guide program improvement.

An approved educator preparation program will be identified as such on the CTC's web page and may be identified as approved on the sponsor's web page, if applicable.

- All approved programs will participate in the CTC's accreditation system, in the assigned cohort.
- In the first, third, and fifth years of the accreditation cycle the programs will submit Biennial Reports.
- In the fourth year of the accreditation cycle, the programs will submit Program Assessment documents.
- In the sixth year of the accreditation cycle, the programs will participate in the Site Visit activities.
- In the seventh year of the accreditation cycle, the programs will participate, as needed, in the 7th Year Follow-up Report.

Newly Approved Program Sponsors Authorized to Offer California Credentials

Once an institution and its programs have gained initial accreditation, the institution will be assigned to an accreditation cohort. These newly approved institutions will enter into the second year of the cycle. Two years following the approval of a new institution and its program(s), which is the fourth year of the accreditation cycle, the approved institution will participate in a Technical Assistance Site Visit rather than submit the normally required Program Assessment document. This allows the Commission the opportunity to provide closer oversight of an institution new to California credentialing while providing some guidance and assistance. During the sixth year of the accreditation cycle, the approved institution takes part in an accreditation site visit. At that point the institution begins the regular annual cycle of activities.

Inactive Program

An institution or program sponsor may decide to declare a program that has been previously approved by the CTC or accredited by the COA as 'inactive.' The following procedures must be followed:

- The institution or program sponsor notifies the Administrator of Accreditation of its intention to declare the program inactive. The program can be deemed inactive when it no longer accepts new candidates into the program and then is recognized only to exist to complete the program for current candidates.
- The notification to the Administrator must include the anticipated date that the inactive status will begin (i.e. the date from which candidates will no longer be admitted to the program).
- Candidates already admitted to the program are notified in writing by the institution or program sponsor that the program is being declared inactive.
- The institution assists enrolled candidates in planning for the completion of their program. A plan regarding how current candidates will complete the program must accompany the inactive request.

- The institution or program sponsor determines a date by which all enrolled candidates will be able to finish the program, not to exceed a maximum of one year after the normative completion date.
- Following the date after which all current candidates will be able to complete the program, as determined by the institution, the program may no longer operate and the institution may no longer recommend candidates for the credential until such a time as the program is re-activated. The program will not be listed on the CTC's public web page for approved programs. The program will appear as inactive in the Credential Information Guide (CIG) web page (http://134.186.81.79/fmi/xsl/CIG_apm/PPPM_all.xml).
- An inactive program will be included in accreditation activities in a modified manner as determined by the Administrator of Accreditation.
- An inactive program may be re-activated only when the institution submits a request to the COA and the COA has taken action to reactive the program. If the program standards under which the program was approved have been modified, the institution or program sponsor must address the updated standards before the program may be re-activated.
- An inactive program may stay on inactive status for no longer than 5 years; after which, the program sponsor should determine whether the program should be withdrawn permanently or reactivated.
- Programs that have been on Inactive status will be notified as the 5 year maximum approaches. Programs that do not respond by notifying the Commission of their intention to withdraw or reactivate the program will be placed on COA Agenda immediately following the 5 year maximum date and automatically withdrawn as of the date of the COA meeting.
- To appeal an automatic withdrawal, an institution is given 90 days from the date of notification of withdrawal to submit a formal letter requesting reconsideration. The appeal letter must be on formal letterhead and should be addressed to the Administrator of Accreditation.
- Any institution requesting reactivation of a program must follow the existing reactivation process and procedures.

Re-activating an Approved Inactive Educator Preparation Program

An Inactive program cannot be Re-activated until the Committee on Accreditation (COA) takes action at a regularly scheduled meeting. The following procedures must be followed:

- Submit a letter requesting re-activation to the Commission indicating the requested date of re-activation, why Re-activation is being requested and if changes have been made to the program

- Submit all necessary supporting documentation. The type of documentation will vary depending on a number of factors including, but not limited to, the length of time the program has been inactive, personnel changes and curricular changes. The institution will need to contact the Administrator of Accreditation to determine what documentation will be necessary.

Once all requested documentation has been reviewed and approved by Commission staff, the request for Re-activation is placed on the COA agenda for final approval. If approved, the Re-activated educator preparation program may, according to their approved activation date:

- Accept candidates to the credential program
- Begin operating the credential program
- Recommend completers for the appropriate credential

Withdrawal of Credential Programs

An institution may decide to withdraw a program that has been previously approved by the CTC or accredited by the COA. The withdrawal of a program formalizes that it is no longer part of the institution's accredited program offerings and, from the CTC's perspective, no longer part of the accreditation system. In order to withdraw a program, the following procedures must be followed:

- The institution notifies the Administrator of Accreditation of its intention to withdraw the program when the current candidates complete the program. The notification must include the date from which candidates will no longer be admitted to the program.
- Candidates already admitted to the program are notified in writing by the institution that the program is being withdrawn. The institution determines a date by which all enrolled candidates will be able to finish the program. The institution assists enrolled candidates in planning for the completion of their program. The institution files the list of candidates and date of their program completion with the CTC.
- Following the date after which candidates will no longer be enrolled (as determined by the institution), the program may no longer operate and the institution may no longer recommend candidates for the credential.
- A program being withdrawn will not be included in any continuing accreditation visits while candidates are finishing the program, provided that the Administrator of Accreditation was notified of the institutional intent to withdraw the program at least one year before the continuing accreditation Site Visit.

- A withdrawn program may be re-accredited only when the institution submits a new proposal for initial accreditation according to the COA initial accreditation policies. From the date in which candidates were no longer admitted to the program, the institution must wait at least two years before requesting re-accreditation of the program.

Discontinuation of Credential Programs

When an institution is required by the COA to discontinue a credential program, the following procedures must be followed:

- Within 60 days of action by the COA, the institution must file, with the Administrator of Accreditation, the institution's plan for program discontinuation.
- Candidates are no longer admitted to the program once the institution is required to discontinue the program.
- Candidates already admitted to the program are notified in writing by the institution that the program is being discontinued. The institution determines a date by which all enrolled candidates will be able to finish the program. The institution helps candidates plan for completion of their program by helping them complete their program at the institution where they are currently enrolled or at another institution. The institution files the list of candidates and dates of program completion with the CTC.
- Following the date after which the institution will no longer enroll candidates (as determined by the institution), the program may no longer operate, and the institution may not recommend candidates for the credential.

A discontinued program may be re-accredited only when the institution submits a new proposal for initial accreditation according to the COA's initial accreditation policies. The institution must wait at least two years after the date of discontinuation before requesting re-accreditation.

Loss of Initial Approval

When an institution withdraws its last program, it loses approval as an accrediting institution. It must wait two years from the date of submitting the withdrawal before applying for approval once again and complete the Initial Program Review anew.