



Accreditation Framework

Educator Preparation in California

**Adopted by the Commission
February 2016**

The Accreditation Framework
Educator Preparation for California

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The Accreditation Framework Educator Preparation for California

Introduction

The *Accreditation Framework* documents the Commission’s policies for accrediting colleges, universities and local education agencies that prepare teachers and other educators for state licensure and professional practice in California’s public schools. “Accreditation” refers to the process of identifying and verifying the quality of each program that prepares educators for serving in the public schools, including verifying that each candidate who completes a program meets the qualifications for licensure established by the Commission.

The major purpose of state accreditation of educator preparation programs is to assure that those who teach and provide a variety of education-related services in the public schools have the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to be effective educators. Additional related purposes of accreditation are summarized below:

- Accreditation assures that programs meet state standards for professional preparation programs, and, in so doing, are allowed to recommend candidates for state licensure.
- Accreditation assures candidates and the public that educator preparation programs are of high quality and effective in preparing candidates to meet licensure requirements.
- Accreditation assures candidates and the public that programs are accountable for the quality and effectiveness of the preparation they provide to candidates.
- Accreditation assures that evidence is reviewed by peers to determine each program’s quality and effectiveness in order to retain their accreditation status.
- Accreditation provides the means for programs to continuously improve based on evidence of candidate outcomes, program effectiveness, and on feedback from ongoing peer review processes.

The information provided in this Framework about California’s Accreditation System represents a significant shift in the Commission’s view of how the system should be designed and implemented to meet its intended purposes, and is the result of an intensive stakeholder-inclusive Accreditation Strengthening and Streamlining project that began in 2014.

Overview of the Accreditation Strengthening and Streamlining Project

Following extensive discussions with the field, the Commission approved plans at its June 2014 meeting to conduct a full review of the then-current accreditation system. In general, the work of the Accreditation Strengthening and Streamlining project focused on implementing the Commission’s vision of an educator program accreditation system for California that increases the focus on evidence-based *candidate and program outcomes* in addition to essential program *inputs* as indicators of both candidate competence and program quality; that provides data transparency to candidates, programs, stakeholders, and the public about the content and the

quality of professional educator preparation programs; and that refocuses preparation programs on providing data based evidence of how they prepare their candidates to meet the Commission's licensure standards in addition to less extensive and more focused narrative documentation.

To implement the Commission's vision, the revised Accreditation System was designed to incorporate the following critical attributes:

- Rigorous educator preparation program standards;
- Valid and reliable performance assessments that ensure candidate competence;
- A variety of reliable candidate and program outcomes measures;
- Accreditation processes that are cost effective, efficiently managed, and able to distinguish poorly performing programs from highly effective programs and provide the Commission with the authority to act accordingly; and
- Improved transparency for the public about educator preparation programs.

The graphic on the following page illustrates the components of the conceptual framework underlying the new accreditation system ultimately approved by the Commission. To conduct the review of the accreditation system, the Commission appointed six groups of stakeholder experts, one for each component of the conceptual framework plus an overarching advisory group. These groups conducted their work primarily during 2014-15, with their efforts resulting in the Commission's adoption of new standards, performance assessments, outcomes measures, data dashboards, and accreditation processes as essential features of the accreditation system for 2016 and beyond.

Key Changes in the Accreditation System for 2016 and Beyond

As a result of the work of the six task groups, the following key changes are now reflected within the Accreditation System:

1. *Revisions to Standards* have been made to refocus on essential elements of program quality, using clear and consistent language; to align the standards with the student academic content standards; to require a strong program clinical experience; and to enable program flexibility and innovation.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework Underlying the 2016 Accreditation System



2. *Revisions to the Accreditation System* have been made to increase the use of reliable candidate and program outcomes data from a variety of sources, including the Teaching Performance Assessment and surveys of candidates, employers and a variety of other stakeholders; to decrease reliance on extensive program narrative documentation; to target the efficient use of site visits to increase focus on issues arising from program reviews while still conducting a comprehensive program review; and to identify both poorly performing programs and those with exemplary practices and outcomes.
3. *An increase in the amount and scope of publicly-available information about the quality and outcomes of preparation programs* has been made to provide increased transparency within the Accreditation System, using, for example, a data dashboard for each accredited program that contains a variety of data elements from multiple sources.

The Professional Character of Accreditation

The Commission believes that professional educators should hold themselves and their peers accountable for the quality of professional preparation. Therefore, the accreditation system's reliance on educators to serve as peer participants is integral to the system: without their professional contributions the accreditation system would not be operable. California educators perform the following critical roles within the accreditation system:

- They serve on the Committee on Accreditation, the statutory body that reviews accreditation evidence and makes accreditation decisions.
- They serve on the Board of Institutional Reviewers, the group of educators trained to review evidence of meeting the Commission's standards and expectations, as well as serve on review teams that make site visits to educator preparation programs and accreditation recommendations to the Committee on Accreditation as part of the accreditation process.
- They provide a diversity of viewpoints within the accreditation system so that the natural and expected variance in program orientation, philosophy, and operational methods across the array of educator preparation programs is both valued and appropriately addressed within the accreditation system.

Efficiency and Cost-Effectiveness of the Accreditation System

The Commission's Accreditation System has been redesigned to maximize efficiency and cost-effectiveness by streamlining the standards that govern educator preparation; reducing the burden and costs for program sponsors to respond to the Commission's preparation program standards; reorienting programs to focus on candidate and program outcomes and essential program information; reducing the lengthy documentation of program inputs; conducting meetings of the Committee on Accreditation in an efficient manner; clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of all participants in the accreditation process; establishing efficient communication processes among all members of and participants in the accreditation system; and by allocating sufficient resources to support the activities of the accreditation system. Accreditation costs which are borne by program sponsors as well as by the Commission should

be reviewed periodically in relation to fulfilling the key purposes and activities of the accreditation system to maximize the cost-effectiveness and the efficiency of the system as a whole.

Section 1 Authority and Responsibilities of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing

Pertaining to the accreditation of educator preparation, the authority and responsibilities of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing include the following:

A. Responsibilities Related to Accreditation Policies

1. **Adopt and Modify the *Accreditation Framework*.** Pursuant to Education Code section 44372(a), the Commission has the authority and responsibility to adopt an *Accreditation Framework*, “which sets forth the policies of the Commission regarding the accreditation of educator preparation in California.” The present document is the adopted *Accreditation Framework*. Education Code section 44372(i) establishes that the Commission may modify the *Framework* in accordance with Section 8 of the *Framework*. Modifications occur in public meetings after the Commission considers relevant information provided by the Committee on Accreditation, institutions, Board of Institutional Review members, Commission staff, and other concerned individuals. The Commission determines when a policy modification takes effect.
2. **Establish and Modify Standards for Educator Preparation.** Pursuant to Education Code section 44372(b), the Commission has the authority and responsibility to establish and modify standards for educator preparation in California.

B. Responsibilities Related to the Accreditation System

1. **Initial Institution Approval.** In accordance with Education Code sections 44227(a) and 44372(c) and Section 4 of this *Framework*, the Commission determines the eligibility of an institution that applies for approval when it is not currently approved to prepare educators for state certification in California. The Commission recognizes institutions that meet the Commission-established criteria. This approval by the Commission establishes the eligibility of an institution to submit a proposal to offer an educator preparation program to the Committee on Accreditation.
2. **Hear and Resolve Accreditation Appeals.** The Commission hears appeals of accreditation decisions, which must be based on evidence that accreditation procedures or decisions were “arbitrary, capricious, unfair, or contrary to the policies of the Commission or the procedural guidelines of the Committee on Accreditation” Education Code section 44374(e). The Commission resolves each appeal, and the Executive Director communicates the Commission’s decision to the Committee on Accreditation, the accreditation team, and the affected institution.

3. **Allocate Resources Annually for Accreditation Operations.** The Commission annually allocates resources for accreditation operations to implement this *Accreditation Framework*. Consistent with the Commission’s general practice, staff assignments to accreditation operations are made by the Executive Director, in accordance with state budgets, laws and regulations. Pursuant to Education Code section 44374.5, the Commission implements a fair and consistent fee policy that is reviewed periodically.
4. **Review and Sponsor Legislation Related to Accreditation.** The Commission reviews legislative proposals to amend the Education Code sections related to the accreditation of educator preparation institutions. As the need arises, the Commission sponsors legislation related to accreditation, after considering the advice of the Commission's professional staff, the Committee on Accreditation, educational institutions, program sponsors, and professional organizations.

C. Responsibilities Related to the Committee on Accreditation

1. **Establish a Nominating Panel.** In collaboration with the Committee on Accreditation, the Commission establishes a Nominating Panel to solicit and screen nominations and recommend educators to serve on the Committee on Accreditation.
2. **Appoint the Committee on Accreditation.** Pursuant to Education Code section 44372(d) and Section 2 of this *Framework*, the Commission appoints members and alternate members of the Committee on Accreditation for specific terms. The Commission selects the Committee members and alternate members from nominees submitted by the Nominating Panel. The Commission ensures that the Committee on Accreditation is professionally distinguished and balanced in its composition, but does not appoint members to represent particular institutions, organizations or constituencies.
3. **Address Issues and Refer Concerns Related to Accreditation.** The Commission considers issues and concerns related to accreditation that it identifies, as well as those brought to the Commission’s attention by the Committee on Accreditation, postsecondary institutions, the Commission's staff, or other concerned individuals or organizations. At its discretion, the Commission may refer accreditation issues and concerns to the Committee on Accreditation for examination and response.
4. **Review Annual Reports by the Committee on Accreditation.** The Commission reviews an *Annual Accreditation Report* submitted by the Committee on Accreditation. The *Annual Accreditation Report* includes, but is not limited to, information about the dimensions and results of the accreditation process.

Section 2 The Committee on Accreditation

The functions, membership, and appointment of the Committee on Accreditation are set forth in Education Code section 44373 and this section of the *Framework*.

A. Functions of the Committee on Accreditation

- 1. Comparability of Standards.** In accordance with Section 3 of this *Framework*, the Committee determines whether standards submitted by institutions under Option 2 (National or Professional Program Standards) or Option 3 (Experimental Program Standards), taken as a whole, provide a level of program quality comparable to standards adopted by the Commission under Option 1 (California Program Standards). If the Committee determines that the proposed standards are collectively comparable in breadth and depth, when taken as a whole, to the Commission-adopted standards, the Committee on Accreditation may approve the proposed standards as Program Standards in California.
- 2. Initial Approval of Programs.** The Committee on Accreditation reviews proposals for the initial accreditation of programs submitted by institutions that have been determined to be eligible by the Commission. New programs of educator preparation may be submitted under Options One, Two, or Three as defined in Section 3 Category II (Program Standards) of this *Framework*. If the Committee on Accreditation determines that a program meets all applicable standards, the Committee on Accreditation grants initial approval to the program.
- 3. Continuing Accreditation Decisions.** After reviewing the recommendations of accreditation teams, the Committee makes decisions about the continuing accreditation of educator preparation institutions and programs, consistent with Section 5 of this *Framework*. With respect to each institution, the Committee makes one of three decisions: Accreditation, Accreditation with Stipulations, or Denial of Accreditation.
- 4. Accreditation Procedures.** Consistent with the terms of Section 5, the Committee recommends appropriate guidelines for reports as well as other accreditation materials and exhibits to be prepared by institutions. The Committee also adopts guidelines for all accreditation activities. The Committee may provide additional guidance to institutions, site visit teams and the Executive Director regarding accreditation procedures. The procedural guidelines of the Committee are published by the Commission as an *Accreditation Handbook*.

5. **Monitor the Accreditation System.** The Committee monitors the performance of accreditation teams and oversees other activities associated with the accreditation system.
6. **Communication With and Reporting to the Commission.** The Committee provides updates on accreditation decisions, activities, implementation matters or other items on an “as needed” basis to ensure the Commission is kept apprised of the effectiveness of its accreditation policies and procedures.
7. **Evaluation of Accreditation Policies and Practices.** The Committee shares responsibility with the Commission for the ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness of the accreditation system. Evaluation and monitoring of the system as well as modification to that system will be conducted in a manner consistent with Section 8 of this Framework.
8. **Conduct Business in an Open, Transparent Manner.** The Committee conducts its business and makes its decisions in meetings that are open to the public, except as provided by statute. All meeting agendas, team reports, and final accreditation decisions will be available to the public on the Commission’s website.

B. Membership of the Committee on Accreditation

1. **Membership Composition.** The Committee consists of twelve members. Six members are from postsecondary education institutions, and six are certificated professionals in public schools, school districts, or county offices of education in California. Selection of members is based on the breadth of their experience, the diversity of their perspectives, and their “distinguished records of accomplishment in education” (Education Code section 44373(a)). All members serve as members-at-large. No member serves on the Committee as a representative of any organization, institution, or constituency. To the maximum extent possible, Committee membership is balanced according to ethnicity, gender, geographic regions and across credentials awarded by the Commission. The Committee includes members from the public K-12 school system and from public and private postsecondary institutions. The elementary and secondary school members include certificated administrators, teachers, and at least one member involved in a professional educator preparation program. The postsecondary members include administrators and faculty members, all of whom must be involved in professional educator preparation programs.
2. **Membership Criteria.** The criteria for membership on the Committee are: evidence of achievement in the education profession; recognized professional or scholarly contributions in the field of education; recognition of excellence by peers; experience with and sensitivity to issues of human diversity; distinguished service in the field of educator preparation; knowledge of issues related to the preparation and licensing of

education professionals; length of professional service; and possession of appropriate educational degrees and professional credentials.

- 3. Membership Orientation and Training.** Members of the Committee will receive an orientation and training to adequately prepare them to effectively carry out their roles and responsibilities on the Committee on Accreditation.

C. Appointment of the Committee on Accreditation

- 1. Nominating Panel.** A Nominating Panel of four distinguished members of the education profession in California identifies and nominates individuals to serve on the Committee on Accreditation. The Nominating Panel is comprised of two educators appointed by the Committee on Accreditation and two educators appointed by the Commission. Each entity will appoint one college or university member and one K-12 public school member to the Nominating Panel. The terms of Nominating Panel members are four years. Members of the Nominating Panel may not serve more than one term.
- 2. Nomination of Committee Members.** To select members for the Committee on Accreditation, a vacancy notice is posted on the Commission website and nominations are solicited in writing from a broad base of professional organizations, agencies, institutions, and individuals in education. Each nomination must be submitted with the consent of the individual. A written endorsement from the nominee's employer confirming understanding of, and agreement to, the nominee's participation on the Committee must be submitted (The Commission provides travel, per diem, and substitute reimbursement, if needed). The nominee's professional resume must be submitted. Self-nominations are not accepted.
- 3. Selection of Committee Members.** Based on the membership criteria and the principles of balanced composition set forth in this section, the Nominating Panel screens the professional qualifications of each nominee and recommends for appointment at least two highly qualified nominees for each vacant seat on the Committee. The Commission selects and appoints the members and alternate members of the Committee by selecting from the nominations submitted by the Panel.
- 4. Terms of Appointment.** The Commission appoints members of the Committee on Accreditation to four-year terms. A member may be re-nominated and reappointed to a second term of four years. A member may serve a maximum of two terms on the Committee. Terms of appointment shall commence on July 1, or the date of the appointment, whichever is later, and shall expire on June 30.
- 5. Committee Vacancies.** When a seat on the Committee becomes vacant prior to the conclusion of the member's term, the Executive Director fills the seat for the remainder of the term by appointing a replacement from the list of alternate members.

Section 3

Accreditation Preconditions and Standards

Preconditions, Common Standards and Program Standards are all foundational requirements that institutions and credential programs are expected to comply with at all times.

Preconditions are requirements grounded in statute, regulations and/or Commission policy. Programs must provide a response to each precondition and include appropriate supporting evidence and/or documentation.

Common Standards Common Standards address aspects of program quality that cross all approved educator preparation programs within an institution and demonstrate that the program sponsor has sufficient infrastructure to support each program's successful implementation. An institution must respond to each Common Standard by providing pertinent information, including information about individual programs.

Program Standards address the quality of program features that are specific to preparation for a given credential, such as curriculum, field experiences, and knowledge and skills to be demonstrated by candidates in the specific credential area. Programs must be in alignment with all applicable credential program standards at all times. The institution responds to the standards by providing program-specific information for review in accordance with Commission processes and procedures specified in the *Accreditation Handbook*. When institutions prepare for initial program approval and continuing accreditation activities, they may consider the following options for program-specific standards:

- **Option 1. California Program Standards.** The Commission adopts California Program Standards for the initial and continuing accreditation of educator preparation programs. When revised program standards are adopted, institutions using this option will be required to meet the new set of California Program Standards.
- **Option 2. National or Professional Program Standards.** California institutions may develop and implement programs that are aligned/accredited by national or state organizations as long as the programs address any areas included in the Commission-adopted standards but not also included in the national or state organization standards. An institution would be required to submit an alignment matrix that provides any information not included in the national program standards. To the extent possible, the Commission will attempt to determine if the national standards are in alignment with the California standards and what additional information would be needed. If the Committee on Accreditation determines that the National or Professional Program standards do not adequately address one or more aspects of California's Standards (Common and/or Program), the Committee on Accreditation may approve the requested standards but also require the institution to address the missing portions contained within the California Standards.

- **Option 3. Experimental Program Standards.** For initial accreditation, an institution may present an experimental, pilot, or exploratory program that meets the Experimental Program Standards adopted by the Commission pursuant to Education Code section 44273. Experimental, pilot, or exploratory programs are designed to allow for the examination of focused research questions intended to contribute to the body of knowledge around key aspects of the field of education including the identification of model strategies, delivery methods, and programs that lead to improved teaching and learning. Institutions that sponsor experimental, pilot, or exploratory programs must have a research component that examines how the program contributes to the development of quality teaching and, more specifically, to the acquisition and mastery by teacher candidates of appropriate performance expectations, such as the *Teaching Performance Expectations* for Multiple and Single Subject Credentials. In addition, experimental, pilot, or exploratory programs are required to report their findings on a biennial basis to the Commission. Upon consultation with the institution and with the Committee on Accreditation, the Commission retains the authority to determine whether the findings support continuance of the experimental, pilot, or exploratory program under the experimental standards.

Section 4

Initial Accreditation Policies

This section governs the Initial Institutional Approval process.

A. Stages of Initial Institutional Approval

A postsecondary education institution, local education agency (LEA), or other entity that is not currently approved by the Commission to prepare educators for California’s public schools must submit a proposal and complete the Initial Institutional Approval process. The Commission may establish additional procedures and criteria as it deems necessary for the initial approval of institutions. Applicants must successfully address each of the following stages in sequence:

1. Prerequisites

- A. Regional Accreditation and Academic Credit: Each institution seeking Initial Institutional Approval must provide evidence that the entity is either regionally accredited or is an LEA with governing board approval to offer an educator preparation program.
- B. Participation in “Accreditation 101: Expectations and Responsibilities for Commission-approved Program Sponsors.” A specified team of representatives from the institution must attend the Commission’s Accreditation 101 training prior to beginning the initial institutional review process.

- 2. Eligibility Requirements.** Eligibility requirements, which are adopted by the Commission, are comprised of criteria related to the institution’s resources and capacity to support educator preparation programs. A report of the institution’s responses to the prerequisites and eligibility requirements will be presented to the Commission at a regularly-scheduled meeting. The Commission will determine if the institution has sufficiently met the requirements for eligibility. Once the Commission determines that an institution is eligible, the institution must demonstrate “Alignment with Applicable Standards and Preconditions,” as described below.
- 3. Alignment with Applicable Standards and Preconditions.** An institution would be required to demonstrate that in operating a credential program, it will align its initial program and operations to all Common Standards, applicable Program Standards, and provide evidence that it will comply with all relevant Preconditions. During the Initial Institutional Approval process Common Standards, applicable Program Standards, and relevant Preconditions including supporting documents are reviewed to determine alignment.
- 4. Provisional Approval or Denial.** Following completion of the first three stages of the Initial Institutional Approval process, the Commission will determine at a regularly scheduled meeting if all requirements have been adequately addressed and if so, may then grant Provisional Approval. Provisional Approval will be for a period of 2 to 3 years, whichever amount of time the Commission determines is sufficient to gather data about the institution’s new program and ensures a least one initial group of completers of that program. Once Provisional Approval is granted, the institution’s new program proposal will be reviewed and submitted to the Committee on Accreditation for approval. During the Provisional Approval period, the institution will participate in regularly scheduled accreditation activities such as submission of annual data and analysis of data for program improvement purposes. No additional educator preparation programs may be added while the institution has Provisional Approval.
- 5. Granting Full Institutional Approval.** Full Institutional Approval will be determined by the Commission at a regularly-scheduled public meeting. A determination of full approval will be informed by data collected during the 2 to 3 year Provisional Approval period and information gathered during a focused site visit at the conclusion of the Provisional Approval period.

B. Integration of Institutions into the Accreditation Cycle

Once the Commission grants full institutional approval, the Administrator of Accreditation will assign an institution to a specific cohort within the 7-year accreditation cycle. The institution will then participate in accreditation activities as defined by the seven-year accreditation cycle.

C. Policies for Initial Program Approval

New educator preparation program proposals by institutions that have been determined to be eligible by the Commission must complete responses to 1) all relevant Preconditions established by state law and by the Commission; 2) Common Standards that address how the new program will integrate into the existing education unit structure; and 3) the appropriate set of Program Standards for the program being proposed. Following the review of these submissions, staff makes a recommendation to the Committee on Accreditation regarding the approval of the proposed program. The Committee on Accreditation considers the recommendation and decides on initial approval of the new educator preparation program. The specific procedures and requirements for submission of new program proposals are included in the *Accreditation Handbook*.

Section 5 Continuing Accreditation Policies

This section outlines the Commission's policies for institutions that have been approved to offer educator preparation credential programs and are seeking continuing accreditation. The specific procedures and requirements for implementing these policies are included in the *Accreditation Handbook*.

A. Overview of the Accreditation Cycle

Contained in this *Framework* are the goals for the Commission's accreditation system. Under this system, accreditation is an ongoing process that fosters greater public accountability, continuous attention to program improvement, adherence to standards, and ensures effective programs. The accreditation system and its interrelated set of activities of annual data review, program review, site visits, and follow up throughout the 7 year cycle is designed to support these goals.

The major components of the seven year accreditation cycle include:

- 1) **Years 1 through 7:** Ongoing data collection and annual data report submission by the institution
- 2) **Years 1 and 4:** Preconditions submission and review
- 3) **Year 5:** Program Review and Common Standards submission and review
- 4) **Year 6:** Institutional site visit to review program implementation
- 5) **Year 7 and beyond:** Follow up on areas of concern, as needed

B. Accreditation Cycle Activities

The following section describes the various activities within the accreditation cycle in general terms. Specific procedures and requirements about all aspects of the accreditation cycle are set forth in the *Accreditation Handbook*.

1. Years 1 through 7 of the Accreditation Cycle: Ongoing Data Collection by the Institution and Annual Data Process and Report

Accreditation decisions must be based on a body of evidence that, together with other forms of information, indicate whether an institution and its programs are in alignment with Commission standards and of quality. The system includes a wide variety of types of data including, but not limited to:

- Survey Data
- Candidate Performance Assessment Data
- Program Effectiveness Data
- Annual indicators included in a data warehouse and data dashboard, as determined by the Commission
- Information provided by a variety of stakeholders in interviews

Ongoing Data Collection - Each institution is required to collect data on an annual basis for each approved educator preparation program related to candidate competence and program effectiveness. Further, all Commission-accredited institutions and program sponsors must use these data to inform programmatic decision making. As specified by the Commission, data collected by an institution/program will be reported annually and the data and its analysis will be updated annually to the Commission's data warehouse. Data provided by institutions will be used to inform accreditation decisions about program quality and alignment with standards.

Annual Data Process and Report - The accreditation system requires that the institution provide evidence of data-informed decision making through the annual submission of data that the institution collects, analyzes, and uses. The annual data process will include the submission of contextual information, data relating to candidate competency and program effectiveness along with an analysis of these data, an action plan based on the analysis, and an institution summary identifying trends across the programs and/or critical issues. The annual data report will be reviewed, may result in further questions or review, and will be part of the documentation made available to the program and site visit reviewers. The specific activities related to the annual data submission will be identified in the *Accreditation Handbook* and will include surveys of completers, employers, and master teachers, as appropriate, as well as performance assessment data for those programs within which performance assessments are required for candidates for the credential. In addition, the Commission will identify additional data that must be submitted annually, such as enrollment totals for each Commission-approved program.

Data Deficiencies: Staff will report to the Committee on Accreditation any institution whose annual data is found to be insufficient and/or that raise questions about the quality of the programs offered. Based on the report, the Committee on Accreditation will determine if further monitoring and/or adjustment to the institution's

accreditation activities is required, including the possibility of an accreditation visit outside the usual schedule.

2. Years 1 and 4 of the Accreditation Cycle: Demonstrating Compliance with the Preconditions

Precondition reports are submitted and reviewed in years 1 and 4 of the accreditation cycle. An institution responds to all relevant preconditions, which are grounded in statute regulations and/or Commission policy, for each approved program.

3. Year 5 of the Accreditation Cycle: Demonstrating Alignment with the Program Standards and Common Standards through Program Review and Common Standards Submission

In the 5th year of each cohort cycle, an institution prepares and submits evidence that demonstrates the program is aligned to the program standards (Program Review) for each approved program. In addition, the institution prepares and submits evidence that demonstrates that the institution operates its educator preparation programs in alignment with the Common Standards. The specific activities are as follows:

- a. **Program Review Submission.** An Institution submits required documentation including, but not limited to, these key components: Program Description, Organizational Structure, Qualifications of Faculty and Instructional Personnel, Course Sequence, Course Matrix, Fieldwork and Clinical Practice. Additional documentation may be required specific to each credential area. Procedures and requirements for Program Review submission are included in the *Accreditation Handbook*.
- b. **Review of Program Documents and Preliminary Report of Findings.** Trained members of the Board of Institutional Reviewers serve as readers to consider all information and determine “preliminary findings” for all program standards. Documents will be reviewed once with feedback in the form of the preliminary report of findings provided to the institution. An institution submits an addendum to the program document based upon the preliminary findings and makes the addendum available to the site visit team prior the accreditation site visit. The Preliminary Report of Findings will be considered in determining the duration and focus of the 6th year site visit. Document review procedures are set forth in the *Accreditation Handbook*.
- c. **Common Standards Review and Preliminary Report of Findings.** An institution submits required documentation demonstrating how the institution continues to meet the Common Standards. Trained members of the Board of Institutional Reviewers serve as readers to consider all information and determine if the program continues to meet the Common Standards. Document review procedures are set forth in the *Accreditation Handbook*.

- d. **Use of Results.** The Preliminary Report of Findings provides a basis for an accreditation site visit team's review of the program's implementation in Year 6. If reviewers identify issues that warrant further examination or if questions remain unanswered at the conclusion of the Program Review and Common Standards review processes, the 6th year site visit may include a more detailed review of such programs. Findings from the Year 5 review will be used to determine the type, size, and complexity of the programs to be reviewed and the structure, size, and expertise of the site visit review team to be selected.

4. Year 6 of the Accreditation Cycle: Institutional Site Visit.

An accreditation team visits each institution in the sixth year of the accreditation cycle. The institution prepares for a site visit that leads to accreditation recommendations based on the team's findings on the Common Standards and all applicable program standards. The Annual Data Submission and Analysis, Program Documents and Preliminary Report of Findings will be made available to the site review team prior to the visit and will inform the accreditation decisions.

- a. **Collection and Review of Evidence.** The accreditation site visit team is comprised of the number of members adequate to review all available evidence to make standards findings and determine accreditation recommendations. The site visit team is responsible for reviewing evidence that will either substantiate and confirm the preliminary findings, or will contradict the preliminary findings of the Program and Common Standards Review processes. The evidence must include survey data, performance assessment data, data collected from stakeholder interviews, and any other data identified in the Accreditation Handbook.

The site visit team gathers information about the quality of the education unit and educator preparation programs at the institution from a variety of sources representing the full range of stakeholders, including written documents and interviews with representative samples of significant stakeholders. The site visit team also examines all relevant information related to the Common Standards and to the standards applicable to the program areas under review. During the site visit, each program in operation participates fully in the interviews. The Committee on Accreditation may add additional members to the team with expertise in the specific program areas(s) identified as needing additional study during the site visit. Data collection procedures are set forth in the *Accreditation Handbook*.

- b. **Procedural Safeguards.** The accreditation site visit team provides ample opportunities during the site review for representatives of the institution to (a) be informed about areas where the standards do not appear to be fully

satisfied, and (b) supply additional information pertaining to those standards. These opportunities include, at minimum, a meeting at approximately mid-visit between representatives of the team and of the institution's/program sponsor's credential programs, after which additional written information or interviews are used by the team in reaching its accreditation decisions.

- c. **Focused Site Visit and a Specialized Credential Program Team.** It is possible that the site visit team may identify a program concern or issue not previously cited in the review of the Program Document. When this occurs, the team may recommend a Focused Site Visit addressing the concerns or issues that have arisen, if the accreditation site visit team determines that the team would benefit from an additional expert member(s) to make sound decisions for a particular program. The Focused Site Visit is scheduled to resolve the uncertainty before the accreditation team's final report and recommendation is submitted to the Committee on Accreditation. In this event, there would be no accreditation recommendation until after the Focused Site visit has been completed. In this case, the pending accreditation status recommendation is not reported during the exit interview.
- d. **Exit Report.** The accreditation site visit team conducts an exit meeting with representatives of the institution, at which time the team presents a summary of the report that will go to the Committee on Accreditation. This report will include the findings relative to the Common Standards and all program standards, a rationale for all standards that are found to be met with concerns or not met, and the site visit team's accreditation recommendation.
- e. **Site Visit Team Reports.** Site visit team reports include a recommendation for an accreditation decision of either *Accreditation*, *Accreditation with Stipulations*, or *Denial of Accreditation* as outlined in Section C below.

5. Year 7 of the Accreditation Cycle and Beyond: Follow Up On Areas of Concern

The site visit will result in an accreditation recommendation for consideration and action by the Committee on Accreditation. Follow up activities may be assigned by the Committee on Accreditation based on any areas of concern.

C. Accreditation Reports, Recommendations and Decisions

Each accreditation site visit team will make its report and recommendations to the Committee on Accreditation at the Committee's regularly-scheduled meetings. Accreditation site visit team reports indicate whether each applicable standard is met and include summary findings along with an accreditation recommendation to the Committee.

- 1. **Accreditation Team Recommendations.** An accreditation site visit team recommends *Accreditation*, *Accreditation with Stipulations*, or *Denial of Accreditation*. The team makes its recommendation based on the overall quality of the education unit and the credential

programs at the institution. The team may recommend Accreditation but also recommend required follow up for the institution and/or one or more of its programs. Alternatively, a team may recommend Accreditation with Stipulations, which may require the institution to provide evidence that the program(s) has made modifications that address the stipulation(s). Stipulations may require the discontinuation of one or more severely deficient programs at the institution. The team may also determine that the overall quality of all programs at the institution are severely deficient and recommend Denial of Accreditation for the institution as a whole.

- 2. Accreditation Decisions.** After reviewing and discussing the recommendation of an accreditation site visit team, the Committee on Accreditation makes a decision about the accreditation of educator preparation at the institution. The Committee makes one of three decisions pertaining to each institution: *Accreditation*, *Accreditation with Stipulations*, or *Denial of Accreditation*. The Accreditation decision is posted on the Commission's website along with the final report. Additionally, The Committee's Annual Accreditation Report summarizes these decisions.
- 3. Required Follow Up.** The Committee on Accreditation may grant accreditation to an institution, but also require follow up for either of one or more programs or of the institution as a unit. The institution's required follow up will be documented in reports submitted to the Committee on Accreditation.
- 4. Accreditation with Stipulations.** The Committee on Accreditation allows an institution one year to address all stipulations or to discontinue a deficient program(s). The Committee on Accreditation has the discretion to grant an institution *Accreditation with Stipulations* that calls for closing a program with severe deficiencies. The Committee may require additional progress reports beyond one year even if stipulations have been removed. The Committee on Accreditation has discretion to allow an institution additional time to address issues. An additional period to remedy severe deficiencies may be granted by the Committee on Accreditation if the Committee determines that (a) substantial progress has been made, and/or (b) special circumstances described by the institution justify a delay. The Committee also determines how the institution's/program sponsor's response to adopted stipulations is to be reviewed up to and including a second site visit for this purpose. Failure to address all stipulations may result in the denial of accreditation to the entire institution. The Committee has the authority to decide that an institution should host its next site visit sooner than seven years. In cases where the institution has significant stipulations it has addressed and the Committee wants to continue to monitor its progress, the Committee may require a site visit in 2, 3, or 4 years instead of the 7 years.

D. Appeals

- 1. Appeals to the Committee on Accreditation.** Within thirty days after an accreditation site visit, the institution may submit evidence to the Committee on Accreditation that the site

visit team demonstrated bias or acted arbitrarily or capriciously or contrary to the policies of this *Framework* or the procedural guidelines of the Committee on Accreditation. (Note: Information related to the quality of a program or the education unit that was not previously provided to the accreditation site visit team may not be considered by the Committee on Accreditation.) The appeal will be addressed at the next regularly-scheduled meeting of the Committee on Accreditation. The Committee on Accreditation may use this evidence to make a different decision than was recommended by the site visit team. If the Committee on Accreditation makes such a decision, the leader of the site visit team may file a dissent with the Commission. If the Committee on Accreditation decides that an incorrect judgment was made by a team and that the result leaves some doubt about the most appropriate decision to be made, the Committee on Accreditation may assign a new site visit team to visit the institution and provide a recommendation on its accreditation.

- 2. Appeals to the Commission.** Pursuant to Education Code section 44374(e), an institution has the right to appeal to the Commission a decision by the Committee on Accreditation to deny accreditation or accredit with stipulations. Such an appeal must be based on evidence that accreditation procedures conducted by the site visit team or decisions made by the Committee on Accreditation were arbitrary, capricious, or contrary to the policies in this *Framework* or the procedural guidelines of the Committee on Accreditation. Information related to the quality of a program or the education unit or LEA that was not previously provided to the accreditation site visit team may not be considered by the Commission. The Commission resolves each appeal pursuant to Education Code Section 44372(f).

E. Complaints about Credential Program Quality

The accreditation system includes a process for individuals to submit complaints for the purpose of consideration in accreditation decisions. When one or more complaints about a credential program indicate that the program may not be meeting Commission-adopted standards, the Commission may investigate the basis for the concerns, provide technical assistance to the institution, and/or refer the concerns to the Committee on Accreditation for consideration of possible action. Only those complaints that indicate a pattern of issues of program quality or raise questions about whether a program is aligned to Commission standards apply to this section. Individual candidate issues such as whether a particular candidate has satisfied all program requirements, disputes about grades or examinations results, or other similar issues will continue to be within the jurisdiction of the program and the institution's grievance process.

Section 6 Board of Institutional Reviewers

This section governs both initial and continuing accreditation reviewers.

A. Board of Institutional Reviewers

To conduct reviews for the initial and continuing accreditation of institutions, the Executive Director of the Commission maintains a pool of trained reviewers consisting of California college and university faculty members, staff and administrators as well as elementary and secondary school teachers and other certificated professionals, pursuant to Education Code section 44374(b). These reviewers may participate in the various accreditation activities discussed in this section. The pool consists of individuals who are geographically and culturally diverse, who represent gender equity, and who have expertise across the spectrum of credential areas. The Committee on Accreditation establishes criteria for membership in the pool. At least once per year, the Professional Services Division trains new members to maintain adequate numbers of active members in the pool.

Conflict of Interest: Care is exercised to avoid conflicts of interest involving accreditation team members and the institution/sponsor being reviewed, such as current, or past enrollment; programmatic collaboration; past, prospective or present employment; and/or spousal connections.

B. Team Structure, Size, and Expertise

- 1. Initial Program Approval:** Institutions that have established eligibility with the Commission may seek to sponsor a credential program by submitting a proposal that is reviewed by Board of Institutional Review members who provide feedback to the institution. Institutions respond to the feedback until the reviewers determine that all submissions meet the requirements of the standards. New programs may also be reviewed by Commission staff members who have expertise in the credential area. Once all the standards are met, the Committee on Accreditation approves the institution to sponsor the program.
- 2. Continuing Program Review:** Under the auspices of the Executive Director, Program Reviewers are appointed for each program being considered for continuing accreditation. Reviewers are responsible for reviewing a credential program's alignment with the standards' requirements. After reviewing the Program Review submission, reviewers will prepare a report containing preliminary findings on all standards and a recommendation regarding the site visit. The institution then provides an addendum to address the findings and makes the addendum available to the site visit team at the time of the site visit. Reviewers with appropriate experience and qualifications are responsible for professional judgments about credential programs. Reviewers are required to have sufficient expertise to make sound judgments about the program under review.
- 3. Continuing Institutional Accreditation (Site Visit Reviewers):** Under the auspices of the Executive Director, a site visit team and team leader is appointed for an institution/sponsor being considered for continuing accreditation. The accreditation team members have responsibility for reviewing all evidence and documentation available and

determining findings for the Common Standards and program standards as well as making a recommendation for accreditation. The size of the site visit team will be determined based upon factors such as: enrollment, complexity of programs, number of satellite locations and preliminary findings. Where issues have been identified for further review during Program Review about particular credential programs, additional members with expertise in the specific program areas may be added to the site visit team.

- 4. Team Expertise.** The range of credential programs at an institution/sponsor must be reflected in the expertise of the reviewers, but there need not be a one-to-one correspondence between credential programs and reviewer specializations. Candidate enrollments in programs, the complexity of programs, and/or the numbers of specialized programs offered by an institution will all be considered when both Program Reviewers and Site Visit teams are created. The nature of the preliminary findings will also be considered in establishing the site visit team.

C. Organization of Continuing Accreditation Activities

- 1. Coordination and Communication between the Program Reviewers and the Site Visit Teams.** Clear and timely communication from the Program Reviewers to the site visit team and from the institution and site visit team is essential. To support a comprehensive and complete review of the program sponsor and all its programs, members of the site visit team should include those who have previously served as Program Reviewers for that particular institution.
- 2. Team Lead.** Under the auspices of the Executive Director, an experienced reviewer is appointed as the leader of a sponsor's Site Visit team for continuing accreditation. The leader's roles are to assist the Commission's staff consultant in planning the review, participate in team size and composition decisions, provide leadership in team training, orientation and support during the site visit, and facilitate team deliberations and decision making. The team lead and the Commission's staff consultant are jointly responsible for management of the program standard reports and the site visit.

D. Training, Orientation, and Evaluation

Prior to participation in accreditation review activities, all Board of Institutional Review (BIR) members complete in-depth training and orientation. All training and orientation is evaluated by participants to guide future training and orientation.

- 1. Training.** To ensure that accreditation review activities examine issues of quality in educator preparation, prospective BIR members participate in an intensive training program which focuses on document review, data analysis, team skills, interview techniques, accreditation procedures, and the consistent application of standards. In adopting an *Accreditation Handbook*, the Committee on Accreditation will attend to appropriate differentiation in the training of new and returning team members and team leaders, and to training and calibration for the different types of review activities: Initial

Program Approval, Program Review, and Site Visits. The Board of Institutional Reviewers will have members who are involved in all types of review activities but not all BIR members must be trained in all types of reviews. All reviewers must be trained in the specific activity or activities in which he or she will be participating.

2. Orientation.

- a. Initial Program Approval:** As new program proposals are submitted by eligible institutions or documents are submitted in response to new program standards, a Commission staff member with expertise in the program area is assigned to ensure calibration of reader responses to the standards and work with all reviewers to ensure that all program documents submitted for initial program approval are reviewed in a fair and equitable manner.
 - b. Program Reviewers:** Program reviewers will meet to review submission of Program Review documents. At such a meeting, a Commission staff consultant will be available. Reviewers of programs will receive training on all standard updates and changes prior to being assigned to read program documents.
 - c. Site Visit Reviewers:** Prior to the beginning of an accreditation site visit, team members confer to discuss their observations about the feedback from the Program and Common Standard reviews and to refresh their understanding of the role of the site visit team. The team activities for the site visit are planned under the direction of the team leader and the Commission's staff consultant.
- 3. Evaluation of Training and Accreditation Activities.** To ensure that future team training and orientations are as effective as possible, all team members will be asked to evaluate training and orientation activities. The Committee on Accreditation will analyze the responses and modify the training appropriately as needed.
- 4. Evaluation of the Performance of BIR Members.** To ensure that accreditation activities are as effective as possible, free of bias and in accordance with high standards of professionalism, the performance of BIR members will be evaluated by other accreditation team members and institutional representatives. This feedback will be considered in determining assignment to future accreditation activities.

E. Role of Commission Staff

The professional expertise of Commission staff will be used in accreditation activities and staff members will be assigned to facilitate accreditation activities. Prior to participation in accreditation review activities, staff will participate in the appropriate orientation and training.

1. Initial Accreditation Activities:

- a. Initial Institution Approval –** Staff facilitates the Initial Institutional Approval process. An institution must complete all aspects of the Initial Institutional

Approval process as outlined in Section 4 of the *Framework*. The Commission determines if an institution has satisfactorily met the Prerequisites, Eligibility Requirements, Common Standards and data available from the program's operations during the Provisional Approval period before considering the institution for Final Approval. Once an institution receives Final Approval, the Administrator of Accreditation determines which cohort within the accreditation cycle the institution will be placed.

- b. **Initial Approval of Programs** – Staff facilitates the review of initial program documents, using members of the Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR) or, if staff has the expertise required, completes the review of the initial program document.

2. Continuing Accreditation Activities:

- a. **Annual Data Reports** - Staff will monitor all annual data reports, summarizing information for the Committee as appropriate and bringing to the Committee attention any data that could raise questions about alignment with standards or program quality.
- b. **Program Review Submissions** - Staff facilitates the review of program documents in the fifth year of the accreditation cycle, using members of the Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR) to accomplish the reviews.
- c. **Common Standards Review** - Staff facilitates the review of Common Standard documents in the fifth year of the accreditation cycle, using members of the Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR) to accomplish the reviews.
- d. **Site Visit** - Staff facilitating the site visit are assigned approximately one year prior to the site visit. Staff work with the institution to prepare for the site visit. Approximately two months prior to the visit, staff conducts a pre-visit to assist in finalizing the plans for the site visit. The site visit team members are members of the Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR); staff is responsible to ensure that the accreditation procedures as developed by the Committee are followed.

Section 7

Articulation Between National and State Accreditation

Upon the request of an institution, the accreditation of an education unit (school, college or department of education) or of a program by a national accrediting body shall substitute for state accreditation provided that the Committee on Accreditation certifies to the

Commission that the national accrediting entity fulfills the following conditions (Education Code section 44374 (f)):

A. National Accreditation of an Education Unit

1. The national accrediting entity agrees to use the Common Standards adopted by the Commission.
2. The accreditation process of the national entity includes on-site reviews.
3. The team has co-leaders, one appointed according to state accreditation procedures and one appointed by the national accrediting body.
4. The team members reviewing the Common Standards include members appointed by the national body and at least one California member appointed according to state accreditation procedures.
5. The review of all program and Common Standards documentation must be completed prior to the site visit, the preliminary findings on all programs and Common Standards must be available to the accreditation team, and the state team members must collect evidence that substantiates the preliminary findings or identifies areas where the institution is not meeting the Commission's standards.
6. Accreditation teams must represent ethnic and gender diversity, and include both school practitioners and postsecondary education members.
7. The period of accreditation is consistent with a seven-year cycle and is compatible with the accreditation activities established by the state.

B. National Accreditation of a Credential Program

1. The accrediting entity agrees to use the adopted California Program Standards for the specific credential under Section 3, Option 1, or the standards used by the national entity are determined by the Committee to be equivalent to those adopted by the Commission.
2. The accreditation team represents ethnic and gender diversity.
3. The accreditation team includes both postsecondary members and elementary and secondary school practitioners; a minimum of one voting member must be from California.
4. The period of accreditation is consistent with a seven-year cycle and is compatible with the accreditation activities established by the state.
5. Nationally accredited credential programs participate in the unit accreditation process. The national accreditation of the program serves in lieu of the state's Program Review process.

Section 8

Evaluation of and Modifications to the *Accreditation Framework*

This section governs the evaluation of the Accreditation system and modification of the *Accreditation Framework*.

A. Evaluation of Accreditation System

The Commission and the Committee on Accreditation are jointly responsible, in consultation with educational institutions and organizations, for establishing, maintaining, and continually refining a system of ongoing evaluation of the accreditation system for educator preparation. The Commission and the Committee on Accreditation will implement a process of continual evaluation and improvement to its accreditation system.

B. Modifications to the *Accreditation Framework*

- 1. General Provisions Regarding Modifications.** The Commission will consult with the Committee on Accreditation and educational institutions, program sponsors, and organizations regarding any proposed modifications to the *Framework*. Modifications will occur in public meetings of the Commission, after the Commission has considered relevant information provided by the Committee on Accreditation, postsecondary institutions, accreditation team members, the Commission's professional staff, and other concerned individuals. The Commission will determine the date when a policy modification is effective.
- 2. Refinements and Clarifications of the *Framework*.** The Commission may modify the *Accreditation Framework* to refine or clarify its contents, as needed. The Commission has the authority to reconsider and modify the Program Standards for Options 1, 2 or 3 as the need arises.
- 3. Significant Modifications of the *Framework*.** The Commission will maintain the *Framework's* major features and options without significant modifications, unless there is compelling evidence that a significant modification is warranted. The determination of compelling evidence and the warranted significant modification will be made by the Commission with the concurrence of the Committee on Accreditation and the Chancellor of the California State University, the President of the University of California, and the President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities.