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Action

Educator Preparation Committee

Strengthening and Streamlining Accreditation: Initial Institutional Approval

Executive Summary: This agenda item provides an update on the work to strengthen and streamline the Commission's Accreditation system. The item reports on strengthening the Initial Institution Approval process.

Policy Question: Are the proposed changes to the Initial Institutional Approval process sufficient to predict the potential success of an approved institution to offer educator preparation in California? Does the proposed process provide adequate information for the Commission to make decisions regarding initial institutional approval?

Recommended Action: That the Commission approve the Initial Institutional Approval process and direct staff to develop revised language for the Accreditation Framework.

Presenters: Cheryl Hickey and Catherine Kearney, Administrators, Lynette Roby, Consultant, Professional Services Division

Strategic Plan Goal

II. Program Quality and Accountability

- a) Develop and maintain rigorous, meaningful, and relevant standards that drive program quality and effectiveness for the preparation of the education workforce and are responsive to the needs of California's diverse student population.

October 2015

Strengthening and Streamlining Accreditation: Initial Institutional Approval

Introduction

This agenda item presents a proposal to strengthen the Initial Institutional Approval process to be followed by institutions that have not previously sponsored educator preparation programs in California. Recommendations for strengthening the Initial Institutional Approval process were presented for consideration by the Commission during the June 2015 meeting (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2015-06/2015-06-5C.pdf>). This item expands on and discusses the operationalization of those recommendations for Commission consideration and action.

Background

The Accreditation Policy and Procedures Task Group is charged with recommending changes to accreditation policies and procedures based on new standards, assessments and the increased focus on candidate and program outcomes. The group's two co-chairs are Margo Pensavalle, University of Southern California and Committee on Accreditation member, and Cheryl Forbes, University of California, San Diego.

At the [June 2015 Commission](#) meeting, recommendations from the Accreditation Policy and Procedures Task Group for strengthening and streamlining the accreditation process, including recommendations to strengthen the Initial Institutional Approval process were presented. In addition, the Commission acted to place a moratorium on any new initial institutional approvals until a new process was considered, and approved by the Commission.

Education Code Section 44372(c) sets forth the Commission's responsibility to rule on the eligibility of an applicant for initial accreditation when the applying institution is not approved to prepare educators for state certification in California. Currently, before an institution seeking approval is presented to the Commission for consideration, it is required to: a) be accredited by Western Association of Schools and Colleges or another of the six regional accrediting associations or, for local education agencies such as schools, districts, or county offices of education, provide verification of the governing board's approval; b) complete the Commission's review of documentation demonstrating compliance with the ten general preconditions and c) complete the Commission's review process to assure alignment with the Common Standards.

Although the process is equitable regardless of the type of sponsoring entity and ensures that all program sponsors are aware and capable of meeting the necessary requirements to sponsor programs that prepare educators for California schools, concern has been raised about the sufficiency of the process in providing the Commission with adequate information to determine initial institutional approval or denial. Further, the current process grants permanent approval

immediately upon Commission approval, which may not afford suitable follow up with new institutions in the first few years of operation.

Currently, there are 253 Commission approved program sponsors in California. A much broader spectrum of entities are seeking approval to offer educator preparation than in past years. In addition to California colleges, universities, and local education agencies, there are out of state and out of country institutions, online institutions, and numerous charter organizations seeking approval. As noted below, at the time that the current moratorium was implemented, a variety of institutions were in some phase of pursuing Initial Institutional Approval.

Types of Entities Currently in the Initial Institutional Approval Process(2015-16)	
Charter School	7
Institution of higher education- Private in-state	1
Institution of higher education- Private out-of-state	2
School Districts (induction)	4
TOTAL	14

Update on Strengthening the Initial Institutional Approval Process

During the June 2015 Commission meeting, recommendations to strengthen the Initial Institutional Approval process were presented to the Commission. Below is a list of the recommendations with additional information and rationale as to how the recommendations would be integrated into a proposed Initial Institutional Approval process that is discussed and detailed in Appendix A of this item.

Recommendation 1: Adopt a policy in which new institutions that have met the Commission’s specified criteria are initially awarded a provisional approval status.

Currently, once an institution is granted initial institutional approval, that approval is permanent until and unless the institution closes, all credential programs close, or the institution is denied accreditation. There is no distinct provisional period or process to ensure that new institutions are being successful in the first years of operation. Under the proposed process, following the successful completion of all requirements for initial institutional approval, the Commission would determine whether it should be approved to sponsor educator preparation programs in California. Should the Commission approve the new institution, the institution would be placed on provisional approval for a minimum of two to three years in accordance with the institution’s program design, ensuring at least one cohort of completers. In order to move from provisional status to permanent status, an institution would need to comply with all accreditation activities, including annual data submission and host a focused visit at the institution’s expense in the last year of provisional approval. Following the focused site visit, the Commission would make the final determination if an institution is granted permanent status.

Recommendation 2: Require additional information be submitted to inform the Commission’s decision about the likelihood of the institution offering effective educator preparation program(s).

The Initial Institutional Approval process has been redesigned and organized into three sequential requirements

- I) Completion of the prerequisites;
- II) Successful completion of all eligibility requirements; and
- III) Alignment to the Applicable Standards and Preconditions.

Commission action after completion of the first two parts would determine if an institution is eligible to continue with Part III of Initial Institutional Approval. A description of these three parts is detailed in Appendix A of this item.

The additional information that would be required would be submitted in Part II, Eligibility Requirements, Criteria 1-8 incorporate the General Preconditions. However, taking into consideration stakeholder, task group and Commission concerns about issues that have arisen in the past, staff is recommending adding Criteria 9-12.

Criterion 9 – *Student Record Management, Access and Security* is an assurance that student records are maintained, secure and that candidates have access to their records and transcripts.

Criterion 10 – *History of Prior Experience and Effectiveness in Educator Preparation* provides the Commission an opportunity to understand a new institution's prior history in education and educator preparation within California as well as in other states.

Criterion 11 – *Capacity and Resources* would include evidence of an institution's plan and capability to provide for sufficient fiscal and instruction support.

Criterion 12 – *Disclosure*, would require institutions to disclose specific information that would be relevant to inform the Commission's decision about initial institutional approval. While some of this information can be obtained through the review of program document, other types of information such as whether any third parties are involved in the delivery of services to candidates would be a new requirement.

Staff proposes that these additional components being added to the eligibility criteria would provide the Commission pertinent information when it considers the institution for provisional approval or denial.

Recommendation 3: Strengthen the precondition requiring demonstration of need.

Since Demonstration of Need is required for each new educator preparation program submitted by an approved institution, the proposal is to move the Demonstration of Need requirement from the Initial Institutional Approval process to the program approval process. To ensure that there is a need for the program(s) that a new institution wishes to offer, it will be required that program proposal(s) are submitted concurrently with the application for initial approval. The program proposals will include responses to four general preconditions including Demonstration of Need. Institutions would be required to demonstrate the need for the proposed program.

Recommendation 4: Require participation in a Commission sponsored “Accreditation 101” professional learning event by a team representing the institution seeking Initial Institutional Approval prior to submitting an application.

A prerequisite for consideration for Initial Institutional Approval would be attendance at *Accreditation 101: Expectations and Responsibilities for Commission Approved Institutions*. Institutions seeking Initial Institutional Approval would be required to send a team composed of a unit head, fiscal officer, directors of proposed program(s) and partner employing organization or educational entity to the seminar. All travel expenses related to attending *Accreditation 101: Expectations and Responsibilities for Commission Approved Institutions* will be borne by the institution. Institutions could not move forward with Initial Institutional Approval until successfully completing this prerequisite.

Recommendation 5: Moratorium of Initial Institutional Approval.

Implementation of a temporary moratorium for Initial Institutional Approval was approved by the Commission at its June meeting. Communication about the moratorium was sent to institutions who had already submitted proposals as well as institutions who had submitted Intent to Submit forms. Information about the moratorium was also posted on the Initial Institutional approval webpage at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/new-program-submission.html>.

Proposed Revised Initial Institutional Approval Process

In order to address the issues identified above, the proposed requirements for Initial Institutional Approval are provided below. The process is distinctly divided into four parts. After submission of Parts I and II, the Commission will determine at its regular meeting, whether an institution is eligible to for initial approval. Once eligibility is determined, an institution may proceed with Part III, Alignment with All Applicable Standards and Preconditions.

A draft of the proposed restructuring of the Initial Institutional Approval process is provided in a detailed table found in Appendix A. In the process described below, the Prerequisites and Criteria 1-6 are all comprised of existing preconditions. Eligibility criteria 8-12 would be new components added to the process to address a variety of concerns raised by the Commission, stakeholders, and others.

The proposed process consists of the following:

Part I - Prerequisites

1. Regional Accreditation and Academic Credit Provide evidence that the entity is either regionally accredited or a Local Education Agency with governing board approval.
2. Participation in *Accreditation 101: Expectations and Responsibilities for Commission Approved Institutions* which will be held quarterly at the Commission offices. An institution would need to attend Accreditation 101 prior to beginning the Initial Institutional process.

Part II - Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility Requirements are comprised of twelve criteria related to resources and the capacity to support educator preparation programs according to Commission Standards. Upon completion of the eligibility criteria, the Commission would make a determination regarding an institution's eligibility to continue with the Initial Institutional Approval process.

1. Responsibility and Authority
2. Mission and Vision
3. Lawful Practices
4. Commission Assurances and Compliance
5. Requests for Data
6. Veracity in Claims and Documentation
7. Grievance Process
8. Communication and Information
9. Student Record Management, Access and Security
10. History of Prior Experience and Effectiveness in Offering Educator Preparation Programs
11. Capacity and Resources
12. Disclosure

Part III – Alignment with All Applicable Standards and Preconditions

An institution would be required to align to all Common Standards and provide evidence of ability to comply with Preconditions. During the initial approval process, Common Standards including supporting documents are reviewed by staff to determine alignment and Preconditions are reviewed for compliance.

Commission Approval

Commission approval occurs in two steps. First, a report of the institution's prerequisites and eligibility would be presented to the Commission at a regularly scheduled meeting. The Commission would then determine if the institution has sufficiently met the requirements for eligibility. If so, the institution would proceed with the Part III Alignment to the Applicable Standards and Preconditions. Once complete, the Commission would determine if all requirements of the Initial Institutional Approval process have been adequately addressed and if so, grant provisional approval. Once provisional approval is granted, the program proposal is reviewed and submitted to the Committee on Accreditation for its approval of the credential program.

As described in Appendix A – Provisional approval would be for 2-3 years, whichever is sufficient to gather data about the initial group of completers.

Granting Permanent Approval:

Permanent approval would be determined by the Commission based on data collected during the 2-3 year provisional time period and information gathered during a focused site visit at the conclusion of the Provisional Approval period.

Questions for Discussion

1. Are the proposed changes to the Initial Institution Approval process sufficient to predict the potential that the approved institution will be appropriate to offer educator preparation in California?
2. Does the proposed process for Initial Institution Approval provide adequate information for the Commission to make decisions regarding a potential institution's approval or denial?

Staff Recommendations

That the Commission:

1. Discuss and approve the proposed Initial Institutional Approval process, as indicated in this agenda item and in Appendix A, with any modifications that it deems necessary.
2. Direct staff to propose revisions to the Accreditation Framework in accordance with this proposal.
3. Direct staff to move ahead with planning the first Accreditation 101 seminar to be held no later than 2 months after the adoption of the relevant sections of the *Accreditation Framework*.

Appendix A

Initial Institutional Approval Becoming Eligible to Offer New Educator Preparation Programs

California law provides the Commission on Teacher Credentialing with the authority to accredit institutions and approve all programs that lead to a credential to serve as an educator in California's public schools. Among other responsibilities, [Section 44225 of the California Education Code](#) provides that the Commission shall establish professional standards, assessment and examinations for entry and advancement in the education profession, adopt a framework and general standards for the accreditation of preparation programs for teachers and other certificated educators, and propose appropriate rules and regulations in this area.

An institution seeking eligibility to offer new educator preparation program(s) must first submit all required documentation that it has met the eligibility criteria and be approved by the Commission. At that point, the institution may continue with the remaining requirement for Initial Institutional Approval and simultaneously submit all applicable preconditions for the first program(s) it plans to sponsor. Requirements for Initial Institutional Approval are provided below. (Approval of the credential specific program proposal(s) will occur only after the Commission grants Initial Institutional Approval). Information and submission requirements for Initial Program Approval can be found on the Initial Program Approval webpage.

See the following page for a summary of the requirements for Initial Institutional Approval.

Appendix A

All Institutions Seeking Initial Institutional Approval Must Successfully Complete the Following:
I – Prerequisite - must be completed prior to beginning the Initial Institutional Approval process
1) Regional Accreditation and Academic Credit
2) Accreditation 101 - Expectations and Responsibilities for Commission Approved Institutions
II – Eligibility Requirements - must be completed and receive approval by the Commission prior to submitting Part III.
Criterion 1: Responsibility and Authority
Criterion 2: Mission and Vision
Criterion 3: Lawful Practices
Criterion 4: Commission Assurances and Compliance
Criterion 5: Requests for Data
Criterion 6: Veracity in Claims and Documentation
Criterion 7: Grievance Process
Criterion 8: Communication and Information
Criterion 9: Student Record Management, Access and Security
Criterion 10: History of Prior Experience and Effectiveness in Offering Educator Preparation Programs
Criterion 11: Capacity and Resources
Criterion 12: Disclosure
III – Alignment with all Applicable Standards and Preconditions
Common Standards
General Preconditions and Program Specific Preconditions
Program Standards Document
Approval by the Commission - If Parts I, II, and III are satisfied, the submitting institution is presented to the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting for consideration.
✓ Provisional Approval
✓ Denial

PART I – Prerequisites

<p>Prerequisite 1</p> <p>Regional Accreditation and Academic Credit</p> <p>Institutions interested in seeking Initial Institutional Approval must identify which of the following applies to their institution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The institution is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges or another of the six regional accrediting associations. A copy of a letter from the accrediting association must be hyperlinked as verification. <input type="checkbox"/> The institution is a public school, school district or county office and has received approval of sponsorship from the agency’s governing board. Verification must be submitted in the form of a letter or board minutes signed by the superintendent or CEO of the agency. <input type="checkbox"/> The institution is neither of the above and is preparing to offer STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs pursuant to SBX5 1 (Chap. 2, Stats. of 2010). Additional requirements are necessary for institutions applying under this category

Appendix A

Prerequisite 2

Accreditation 101 - Expectations and Responsibilities for Commission Approved Institutions

Prior to accepting an application for initial institutional approval, the Commission requires that the institution send a team to Accreditation 101, a professional training that provides information regarding eligibility and outlines the expectations and responsibilities of Commission approved program sponsors including reporting requirements, applicable program standards, annual accreditation fees, credential recommendation and student record responsibilities, and other expectations for Commission approved institutions that sponsor educator preparation in California.

Required attendees include:

- Unit head
- Fiscal Officer
- Directors of Proposed Program(s)
- Partner Employing Organization or educational entity
- Other participants deemed necessary by the institution

All fees for attending Accreditation 101 are borne by the institution.

PART II – Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility Requirements will be brought before the Commission for consideration and a determination of approval or denial. A finding of approval will allow an institution to move forward to Part III of the Initial Institutional Process.

Criterion 1

Responsibility and Authority

Institutions seeking Initial Institutional Approval must:

- a) Identify the position within the organizational structure that is responsible for ongoing oversight of all educator preparation programs offered by the entity including educator preparation programs offered by extension divisions.
- b) Identify the individual who will coordinate each educator preparation program sponsored by the entity. Provide a description of the reporting relationship between this person(s) and (a). If a reporting relationship is indirect, describe the levels of authority and responsibility for each educator preparation program.
- c) Provide an organizational chart for the institution as well as the division(s) within the institution responsible for the oversight of educator preparation programs; include any parent organization, outside organization(s), or partner(s) who will be involved in the oversight of the educator preparation unit and/or responsible for program delivery.
- d) Provide policies to ensure that duties regarding credential recommendations are not delegated to persons other than employees of the Commission approved institution.
- e) Provide assurance that individuals identified as responsible for credential recommendations will participate in Commission training related to the recommendation process.

Appendix A

Criterion 2

Mission and Vision

To be granted initial institutional accreditation, an institution must:

- provide its mission and vision related to educator preparation
- confirm that the mission and vision will be published on the website and in institutional documents provided to candidates

Criterion 3

Lawful Practices

To be granted initial institutional accreditation, a program of professional preparation must be proposed and operated by an entity that makes all personnel decisions without unlawful discrimination. The entity must provide written policy as verification that decisions regarding the admission, retention or graduation of students, and all personnel decisions regarding the employment, retention or promotion of employees are made without unlawful discrimination.

Criterion 4

Commission Assurances and Compliance

To be granted Initial Institutional Approval, the initial program proposal must include the following assurances:

- a) That there will be compliance with all preconditions required for the initial program(s) the institution would like to propose (General and program specific preconditions for proposed programs must accompany this document)
- b) Provide assurance that all required reports to the Commission including but not limited to data reports and accreditation documents, will be submitted by the Commission approved entity for all educator preparation programs offered including extension divisions.
- c) That the sponsor will cooperate in an evaluation of the program by an external team or a monitoring of the program by a Commission staff member.
- d) That the sponsor will participate fully in the Commission's accreditation system and adhere to submission timelines.
- e) That once a candidate is accepted and enrolled in the educator preparation program, the sponsor must offer the approved program, meeting the adopted standards, until the candidate;
 - i. Completes the program;
 - ii. Withdraws from the program;
 - iii. Is dropped from the program;
 - iv. Is admitted to another approved program to complete the requirements, with minimal disruption, for the authorization in the event the program closes. In this event, an individual transition plan would need to be developed with each candidate.

Appendix A

Criterion 5

Requests for Data

An institution seeking Initial Institutional Approval must identify a qualified officer responsible for reporting and responding to all requests from the Commission within the specified timeframes for data including, but not limited to:

- a) program enrollments
- b) program completers
- c) examination results
- d) state and federal reporting
- e) candidate competence
- f) organizational effectiveness data
- g) other data as indicated by the Commission

Criterion 6

Veracity in all Claims and Documentation Submitted

To be granted Initial Institution Approval, the institutional leadership (Dean or Superintendent) must positively affirm the veracity of all statements and documentation submitted to the Commission. Evidence of a lack of veracity is cause for denial of initial institutional accreditation.

Criterion 7

Grievance Process.

To be granted Initial Institution Approval, the sponsor must:

- a) Provide a clearly delineated grievance process for candidates and applicants.
- b) Demonstrate that information pertaining to the grievance process is accessible to all candidates and applicants.
- c) Provide documentation that candidates have been informed of the grievance process and that the process has been followed.

Criterion 8

Communication and Information

To be granted Initial Institution Approval, the sponsor must provide a plan for communicating and informing the public about the institution and the educator preparation programs. The plan must demonstrate that:

- a) The institution will create and maintain a website that includes information about the institution and all approved educator preparation programs. The website must be easily accessible to the public and must not require login information (access codes/password) in order to obtain basic information about the institution's programs and requirements as listed in (b).
- b) The institution will make public information about its mission, governance and administration, admission procedures, and information about all Commission approved educator preparation programs.
- c) Information will be made available through various means of communication including but not limited to website, institutional catalog, and admission material.

Criterion 9

Student Records Management, Access, and Security

To be granted Initial Institution Approval, the sponsor must demonstrate that it will maintain and retain student records. Institutions seeking Initial Institutional Approval will provide verification that:

Appendix A

- a) Candidates will have access to and be provided with transcripts and/or other documents for the purpose of verifying academic units and program completion.
- b) All candidate records will be maintained at the main institutional site or central location (paper or digital copies).
- c) Records will be kept securely in locked cabinets or on a secure server located in a room not accessible by the public.
- d) Candidates will be provided with transcript and/or other documents for the purpose of verifying academic units or program completion.

Criterion 10

History of Prior Experience and Effectiveness in Educator Preparation

Institutions seeking Initial Institutional Approval must have sponsored an educator preparation program leading to licensure, or participated as a partner in any educator preparation programs and/or programs focused on K-12 public education and provide history related to that experience. CTC staff reserve the right to conduct Google/Nexus searches regarding the institution, governing board and administration. Institutions must submit:

- a) History related to its prior experience preparing, training and supporting educators within California or in other states
- b) A list of all states and/or countries in which the institution is currently operating and the status of the institution's approval in each of those locations
- c) Retention and completion data in educator preparation programs or other programs when educator preparation data are not available.
- d) Proof of third party notification enlisting comments to be sent to: xxxapproval@ctc.ca.gov

Criterion 11

Capacity and Resources

To be granted Initial Institution Approval, an institution must submit a Capacity and Resources plan providing evidence about how it will sustain the educator preparation program(s) through a 2 – 3 year provisional approval (if granted) at a minimum. An institution's Capacity and Resource plan must include:

- Copy of the most recent audited budget for the institution
- A proposed operational budget for the educational unit
- Information about instructional and support personnel for the educational unit
- Evidence of K-12 partnerships for the purposes of providing fieldwork
- Information about facilities and/or digital learning platforms
- A plan to teach out candidates if, for some reason, the institution is unable to continue providing educator preparation program(s)

Criterion 12

Disclosure

Institutions must disclose:

- Information regarding the proposed delivery model (online, in person, hybrid, etc.)
- All locations of the proposed educator preparation programs including satellite campuses.
- Any outside organizations (those individuals not formally employed by the institution seeking Initial Institutional Approval) that will be providing any direct educational services as all or part of the proposed programs.

Appendix A

PART III – Alignment with all Applicable Standards and Preconditions

Once an institution seeking Initial Institutional Approval receives approval for eligibility following Part II, Eligibility Requirements, the institution may continue in the Initial Institutional Approval process by submitting the following:

1) Common Standards - Common Standards reflect aspects of program quality that are the same for all credential programs, regardless of type of program. The program sponsor must respond to each Common Standard by providing information and supporting documentation that is inclusive of all credential programs to be offered by the institution. An institution's responses are reviewed by Commission staff and must be aligned to the Common Standards before Initial Institutional Approval can be brought before the Commission for consideration.
2) All General and Program Specific Preconditions – Preconditions are statements of Commission policy or state statute. An institution's responses are reviewed and must be in compliance with the general and program specific preconditions before the initial Institutional Approval can be brought before the Commission for consideration.
3) Program Standards Document – A document addressing the specific credential program standards for which the institution seeks to initially offer must be submitted before the institution's application for Initial Institutional Approval is brought to the Commission for consideration.

Commission Approval

Once an institution has satisfied Parts I, II, and III of the Initial Institutional Approval process, the institution's application will again be brought before the Commission for its consideration and a determination regarding Initial Institutional Approval will be made.

Provisional Approval

If the Commission approves the new institution, it would be allowed to operate under *Provisional Approval*. The provisional timeframe will be determined by the Commission and will span 2 to 3 years, in accordance with the program's design. At a minimum of 2 years, this timeframe will be adequate for an initial group of candidates to complete the program thereby allowing for data to be collected to determine the institution's effectiveness in educator preparation. No additional programs will be approved during this period.

Permanent Status

Permanent status will be determined by the Commission based on the following information:

1. Analysis of data collected during the 2-3 year provisional time period
2. A focused site visit conducted at the conclusion of the Provisional Approval. Any expenses incurred during the focused site visit are the responsibility of the institution seeking permanent status.