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Information/Action

Certification Committee

Proposed Additions and Amendments to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations Pertaining to Official Transcripts

Executive Summary: This agenda item presents proposed amendments to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations pertaining to official transcripts.

Recommended Action: Staff recommends that the Commission adopt the proposed amendments to the regulations pertaining to official transcripts.

Presenter: Joshua Speaks, Manager, Certification Division

Strategic Plan Goal

I. Educator Quality

- c) Ensure that credential processing and assignment monitoring activities accurately, effectively, and efficiently identify educators who have met high and rigorous certification standards and who are appropriately assigned.

Proposed Additions and Amendments to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations Pertaining to Official Transcripts

Introduction

The proposed amendments to Title 5 §80435 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR) are intended to clarify and make specific what an institution, local education agency, or individual educator must submit to the Commission to verify a credential candidate has met the requirement of holding a baccalaureate degree, as required pursuant to Education Code (EC) §44225. The proposed amendments also fulfill the necessity of updating and redefining what comprises an official transcript to more accurately reflect 21st century realities.

Background

Almost all credentials and permits require some form of coursework or degree be verified in order for an applicant to qualify for the requested document, as outlined in statute and regulations. Education Code §44225(a)(1)(A) includes “possession of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution” as one of the basic requirements for a preliminary teaching credential. Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations §80435 defines what should be submitted with applications for credentials, certificates, and permits to verify coursework or baccalaureate requirements. This includes a definition for “official transcripts.”

Currently, 5 CCR §80435 defines an official transcript as one that bears the signature in ink of the registrar and/or the impressed seal of the institution. In addition, the regulation allows the Commission to accept photocopies of “official transcripts” when submitted on behalf of an applicant by an approved program sponsor or local education agency.

However, 5 CCR §80435 has not been amended since its initial implementation in August 1983. Since that time, many changes have taken place with how institutions of higher education create and distribute transcripts. Today, transcripts are rarely if ever seen with an actual ink signature of an institution’s registrar, and many no longer use raised seals to signify that a document is authentic. Further, more and more institutions are relying on an electronic transcript delivery model. Therefore, it has become necessary to expand the definition of what will be accepted as an official college transcript for credentialing purposes to more accurately reflect modern times.

On March 17, 2016, the Commission distributed Credential Information Alert (CIA) 16-01 to provide additional guidance to institutions of higher education, local education agencies, and Commission-approved program sponsors regarding the type of documents that would be accepted as “official transcripts,” depending on the type of application submitted (whether paper or online) or for the purpose of the transcript. The proposed additions and amendments in this agenda item are now being brought forward to begin the regulatory process to update and codify these guidelines.

Summary of Proposed Amendments

(a) Proposes removing the old date of September 1, 1983 as the requirements set forth here are intended to be continuous and not tied to any specific date. Proposes adding the phrase “requiring degree verification or evaluation to establish academic eligibility for the document requested” to clarify the purposes served by the submission of official transcripts and verified true copies of transcripts.

(b) Change the phrase to “Commission-approved programs” to more clearly define the source of approval and to be consistent with the rest of this section.

(b)(1) Proposes deleting the word “college” and adding the phrase “Commission-approved program sponsor” to clarify the organizations that now are impacted by these regulations. Proposes adding the phrase “certificate, or authorization” to include other types of recommendations program sponsors submit that may require the inclusion of transcripts.

(b)(2) Proposes deletion of the original paragraph in this subsection and rewording it in subsection (e) to accompany the definitions of terms used in this section. Proposes adding language to clarify that the Commission will accept copies of official transcripts from education agencies that verify their authenticity with the original documents.

(b)(3) Proposes adding language to establish guidelines for accepting electronically transmitted transcripts, as this option did not exist in 1983 when the regulations were last updated.

(b)(4) Proposes adding language to establish guidelines for accepting unofficial transcripts from institutions of higher education when submitting to the Commission recommendations for a credential, certificate, or authorization. Unofficial transcripts may only be accepted when the institution submitting a recommendation on behalf of a candidate is also the institution where the applicant earned the degree indicated on the transcript.

(c) Propose changing “applicants” to “Applicants” to correct the grammar.

(c)(1) Proposes adding this subsection to clarify that electronically transmitted transcripts will not be accepted directly from an applicant for a document. Electronically transmitted transcripts must be received from the degree granting institution, either directly or through a vendor used by the institution, or from a 3rd party other than the applicant such as a Commission-approved program sponsor or education agency, to minimize opportunities for tampering or fraud.

(d) Propose changing “applications” to “Applications” to correct the grammar. Proposes changes to clarify that illegible transcripts will not be returned but that the Commission will contact the applicant, or the education agency submitting the application on the applicant’s behalf, and request the correct legible transcripts be submitted. Individual applicants must submit official transcripts as described in subsection (e); institutions of higher education, Commission-approved program sponsors, and local education agencies may submit official transcripts or verified true copies as defined in subsection (e).

(e) Proposes moving this paragraph to subsection (e)(1) and adding to (e) that this subsection will be used to provide definitions for the terms used throughout 80435.

(e)(1) Proposes adding this subsection to provide definition of what is meant by the use of the term “official transcript.”

(e)(1)(A) – (e)(1)(C) Proposes adding these subsections to clarify and expand the definitions of what may be accepted as an official transcript beyond the limitations of the current definition in regulations that only defines the options available when these regulations were last updated.

(e)(2) Proposes adding this subsection to clarify the definition for a verified true copy of an official transcript.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the proposed amendments to Title 5 CCR §80435 to allow submission of the rulemaking notice file to the Office of Administrative Law. A public hearing will be scheduled for this item only if any interested party or his or her duly authorized representative submits in writing, no later than 15 days prior to the close of the 45-day written comment period, a request to hold a public hearing [Government Code §11346.5(a)(17)].

CALIFORNIA CODE OF REGULATIONS

TITLE 5. EDUCATION

DIVISION 8. COMMISSION ON TEACHER CREDENTIALING

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§ 80435. Official Transcript.

(a) For purposes of authenticity and legibility, official transcripts or verification-of-true-copy will be required with each application for a credential, certificate or permit ~~submitted on and after September 1, 1983~~ requiring degree verification or evaluation to establish academic eligibility for the document requested;

(b) Colleges and universities with Commission-approved programs, school districts, county offices, and other state agencies shall meet this requirement either by submitting official transcripts with the application or by verification of the copy as a true copy of the official transcripts by one of the following means:

(1) A recommendation by the ~~college~~ Commission-approved program sponsor for the credential, certificate, or authorization; for recommendations submitted by program sponsors online, the transcripts may be submitted as an electronic attachment.

(2) ~~verifying the authenticity of the transcript;~~ an application packet that includes photocopies of official paper transcripts submitted by an organization or agency as defined in subsection (b) are accepted as verified true copies;

(3) a copy of an official transcript submitted to the Commission by an organization or agency as defined in subsection (b) that was electronically transmitted from a college or university, or from an organization authorized by a college or university to forward its transcripts electronically. The application packet must include with electronically transmitted transcripts a coversheet or other evidence that verifies the transcript was forwarded directly to the submitting organization or agency and not to the individual applying for the credential or permit.

(4) For degree verification purposes only, colleges and universities offering Commission-approved preparation programs may submit unofficial transcripts along with a recommendation for a credential, certificate, or authorization, provided the approved program sponsor is also the applicant's degree granting institution.

~~(c) a~~ Applicants applying directly to the Commission, for a credential, certificate, or permit shall be required to submit official transcripts with the credential application;

(1) A transcript electronically transmitted directly to an applicant for a credential, permit, or certificate will not be accepted by the Commission as an official transcript.

~~(d) a~~ Applications submitted with illegible transcripts, ~~or submitted by colleges, school districts, county offices or other state agencies who have not met the requirements specified in subsection (b)~~ shall not be returned ~~accepted~~. The ~~to the~~ sender will be notified of the need to provide for proper verification or for legible official transcripts or verified true copies;

~~(e) an official transcript is defined as one that bears the signature in ink of the registrar and/or the impressed seal of the institution~~ The following definitions apply to this section:

(1) An official transcript may be defined as one of the following:

(A) an original paper transcript issued by the institution that bears the signature of the institution's registrar and/or the impressed seal of the institution;

(B) a transcript electronically transmitted directly to the Commission from a college or university; or

(C) a transcript electronically transmitted directly to the Commission from an organization authorized by a college or university to forward its transcripts electronically to education agencies or individuals.

(2) A verified true copy of a transcript may be defined as a photocopy of an original paper or electronically transmitted official transcript that includes a statement or stamp signed or initialed by the designated agency representative verifying each set of transcripts submitted to the Commission, that the copy is an authentic duplicate of the official transcript.

Note: Authority cited: Section 44225, Education Code. Reference: Section 44252, Education Code.