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## Action

### *Educator Preparation Committee*

### **Refinements to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval Process**

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**Executive Summary:** This agenda item presents for Commission approval refinements to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval process.

**Recommended Action:** That the Commission adopt the refinements presented in this item to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval process.

**Presenter:** Erin Sullivan, Administrator, Professional Services Division

#### **Strategic Plan Goal**

#### ***II. Program Quality and Accountability***

- b) Effectively and efficiently monitor program implementation and outcomes and hold all approved educator preparation programs to high standards and continuous improvement through the accreditation process.

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# Refinements to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval Process

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## Introduction

This agenda item presents for Commission approval refinements to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval (IIA) process. Stage V is the final stage of the IIA process. The preceding stages serve to ensure the institution has legal eligibility to operate in California (Stage I), has the capacity to sponsor effective programs (Stage II), demonstrates commitment to operate in alignment to the preconditions and Commission-adopted Common Standards (Stage III), and demonstrates alignment of its proposed programs to the Commission's adopted program standards. The table in [Appendix A](#) further illustrates this purpose and the evidence required of the institution. After successfully advancing through Stages I-IV, an institution will operate its program for a provisional period of two to three years and then host a provisional site visit. This site visit along with the institution's appearance before the Committee on Accreditation (COA) and the Commission, respectively, is the culminating activity in the five-stage IIA process.

## Background

California Education Code §44372(c) gives the Commission the authority to accredit institutions that seek to offer programs that lead to a credential to serve as an educator in California public schools. As such, the Commission devised and formally adopted a five-stage IIA process in 2016. The intention for this process was to create a more rigorous system for approving institutions who have not previously been approved by the Commission to operate educator preparation licensure programs in California. Since that time, eight institutions have moved through the entire process, including hosting a provisional site visit, and been considered for full institutional approval by the Commission. Two more institutions will host provisional site visits in the 2022-23 accreditation year and up to nine will host visits in 2024-25.

As mentioned above, institutions host a provisional site visit after receiving approval to offer a specified program or programs for a period of two to three years (Stage IV) as determined by Commission action. As part of the provisional site visit, a Commission consultant and team of peer reviewers from the Commission's Board of Institutional Review interview a variety of program constituents and review documentation and data to determine the program's alignment to all applicable standards and preconditions. The site visit team lead presents the site visit report to the Committee on Accreditation (COA). The report includes the team's findings on the institution's alignment to Common Standards and alignment of its programs to all applicable program standards. The report also includes the team's recommendation to the COA on an accreditation status and any stipulations related to standards that are found to be less than fully met. After reviewing the site visit report and discussing any concerns or findings with the site visit team lead and/or institution representatives during a scheduled COA meeting, the Committee may accept or modify the team's accreditation recommendation and stipulations, if any, as is within their authority. Institutions that receive an accreditation status

that includes stipulations may have a variety of requirements placed on them by the COA including submission of scheduled follow-up reports and/or a focused revisit. These follow-up reports and any report from a focused revisit also come before the COA for their review in order that the COA may ensure the institution is moving toward full alignment with the Commission's adopted standards.

As the Commission's adopted procedures for Stage V currently stand, following the provisional site visit and the presentation of the site visit report to the COA, the next step in the Stage V process is for Commission staff to present the site visit report and the COA's accreditation decision to the Commission. Based on the information contained in the site visit report and the accreditation decision made by the COA, the Commission may then make one of four decisions:

- 1) Grant full approval to the institution as an accredited program sponsor;
- 2) Grant full approval to the institution as an accredited program sponsor and remand the institution back to the COA to address stipulations that have been placed on it;
- 3) Hold the institution in provisional status for a year while it addresses stipulations; or,
- 4) Deny approval to the institution at which point the institution would need to develop a teach-out plan for current candidates, as overseen by Commission staff, and discontinue any further enrollment.

In the case of decision 2 above, the institution returns to the oversight of the COA to address stipulations placed on it by that body and is permitted to propose new programs at any time following the Commission's decision; these institutions do not come before the Commission again. In the case of decision 3, the institution returns to the oversight of the COA for one year to address stipulations placed on it by that body, is not permitted to propose new programs, and is required to return to the Commission for consideration of full institutional approval within one year.

There have been eight provisional site visits completed in the last three years: one in 2019-20, three in 2020-21, and four in 2021-22. Of these eight institutions, the COA granted an accreditation status of Accreditation to half and half received Accreditation with Stipulations. When the institutions with stipulations came before the Commission, the Commission's decision was to grant full institutional approval and remand the institution back to the Committee on Accreditation to oversee the institution's response to stipulations. Two of the three most recent provisional site visit institutions with stipulations cleared their stipulations within six months of their site visit; the third is making satisfactory progress on its quarterly reports.

As staff continues to implement the Commission's IIA process and work with institutions moving through the process, areas for improvement in the process have been identified. For example, staff recently developed an Accreditation 201 module. This module will be presented to institutions following approval of their programs in Stage IV when programs are set to begin enrollment and operationalization of their newly approved programs. The first Accreditation 201 was held in December 2021. The feedback survey completed by institutions in attendance

was very positive and indicated that this module was indeed helpful. Staff is also adding semi-annual check-ins with institutions in Stage V to ensure ongoing support.

As the Committee on Accreditation has had more experience with the IIA process, they have identified and discussed some areas where refinements might streamline and strengthen the process for the Commission, staff, and the institutions moving through IIA. The appointment of the members of the Committee on Accreditation and the work of that body are provided for in statute. As part of its work as the Commission's appointed accrediting body, the Committee reviews 30 or more accreditation site visit reports each academic year, including provisional site visits. Thus, with its statutorily recognized expertise and vast experience, the Committee is well prepared to provide additional support to the Commission and institutions in Stage V of the IIA process. The COA and staff believe that institutions might be retained under the purview of the COA in certain circumstances following provisional site visits rather than putting them forward to the Commission only to have them returned to the COA and, in some cases, return to the Commission again. Instead, the Commission might consider adjusting the process by which an institution is moved forward to the Commission for final approval. The proposed process is as follows:

Institutions that receive Accreditation or Denial of Accreditation following a provisional site visit would be moved to the Commission at the next soonest meeting following the COA's decision.

Institutions that receive Accreditation with Stipulations following a provisional site visit would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The COA would determine whether to put the institution forward to the Commission or retain it under the purview of the COA to provide oversight and guidance while the institution addresses the stipulations. For example, institutions with multiple stipulations or one or two stipulations that are slightly more serious would be retained in provisional status under the purview of the COA while ones with stipulations that can be addressed more easily would be put forward for full approval by the Commission.

Institutions that receive Accreditation with Major Stipulations or Probationary Accreditation would automatically be retained under the purview of the COA to provide oversight and guidance while the institution addresses the stipulations.

Any institution retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations would be held for a period of not more than one year, possibly less, beginning from the time of the institution's appearance before the COA and the COA's vote on its accreditation status. After one year the institution would appear before the Commission regardless of the status of its accreditation or any remaining stipulations at that time.

All institutions retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations would be required to submit progress reports to the COA providing evidence that appropriate actions

are being taken to address the stipulations in a timely manner. These reports shall be at least quarterly but may be more frequent, as determined by the COA.

Institutions retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations would remain in provisional status and would not be permitted to propose new programs. This recommendation would be a new requirement and is based on the recommendation of staff and COA that an institution that is newly implementing programs should continue to focus on bringing those programs into alignment with Commission standards before seeking to add additional new programs.

Institutions that have been retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations and that have done so to the satisfaction of COA, would be moved to the Commission at the next soonest meeting, or the next most feasible meeting, following the COA’s decision to lift the stipulations or at the end of the year regardless of their status.

The following table illustrates the modifications above:

<b>Accreditation Decision</b>	<b>Move to Commission</b>	<b>Follow-up Reports</b>	<b>Permit New Programs?</b>
Accreditation	Yes	N/A	Yes
Accreditation with Stipulations	Determined case-by-case	Yes	Not if retained by COA
Accreditation with Major Stipulations	No	Yes	No
Probationary Accreditation	No	Yes	No
Denial of Accreditation	Yes	N/A	No

**Staff Recommendation**

Staff recommends that the Commission adopt the proposed refinements to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval process.

**Next Steps**

If adopted by the Commission, staff will update the Committee on Accreditation’s Procedures Manual and inform the Committee at its next meeting.

## Appendix A

**Initial Institutional Approval: Five Stages Chart**

IIA Process	Stage I	Stage II	Stage III	Stage IV	Stage V
<b>Action</b>	<b>Prerequisites</b>	<b>Eligibility Requirements</b>	<b>Preconditions &amp; Common Standards</b>	<b>Program Standards</b>	<b>Provisional Site Visit</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Ensures legal eligibility of institution in California  Ensures institution understands requirements of Commission's accreditation system	Ensures that institution has capacity to sponsor effective programs	Ensures institution meets all relevant preconditions  Ensures institution meets all Common Standards	Ensures all proposed programs meet all relevant program standards	Program operates for 2-4 years and hosts a provisional accreditation site visit
<b>Requirements</b>	Institution must: 1. Have legal eligibility 2. Attend Accreditation 101 with institutional team	Submit responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 12 Eligibility Criteria</li></ul>	Submit responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preconditions</li><li>• Common Standards</li></ul>	Submit responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Program Standards</li></ul>	Institution must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collect data</li><li>• Host provisional site visit</li></ul>
<b>Reviewed By</b>	Staff	Staff	<b>Preconditions:</b> Staff <b>Common Standards:</b> BIR	BIR	Site Visit Team & COA
<b>Authority</b>	Staff	Commission	Commission	COA	Commission
<b>Decision</b>	Determine Eligibility for Stage II	Eligibility: 1. Grant 2. Deny	Provisional Approval: 1. Grant 2. Deny	Program(s): 1. Approve 2. Deny	1. Grant Full Approval 2. Grant Full Approval & Remand to COA to Address Stipulations 3. Continue Provisional Status for 1 Year to Address Stipulations 4. Deny Approval
<b>IIA Status*</b>	Not Approved	Not Approved	Provisional Approval**	Provisional Approval***	Full Approval

\*At conclusion of stage

\*\*Institutionally-approved but cannot offer programs

\*\*\*May begin offering approved programs