

Chapter Three

Institutional and Program Approval and Change of Status

Introduction

This chapter describes the processes by which an institution gains initial institutional approval from the Commission, which allows the institution to propose specific credential preparation programs for approval by the COA. This chapter also provides information about the status options for programs: approved, inactive, discontinued, or withdrawn.

I. Initial Institutional Approval

According to the *Accreditation Framework* (Section 1-C-1), the Commission is responsible for determining the eligibility of a postsecondary education institution, local education agency (LEA), or other entity that is not currently approved to prepare educators for California's public schools. These institutions must submit an application to the Commission for initial institutional approval to submit programs.

The Initial Institutional Approval process has been 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 stages determines if an institution is eligible to continue with Part III of the Initial Institutional Approval process.

STAGE I – Prerequisites

Prerequisite 1: Regional Accreditation and Academic Credit

Institutions interested in seeking Initial Institutional Approval must identify which of the following applies to their institution.

- 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.
- The institution is a public school, school district, or county office of education 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.
- 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 (See <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/SBX5-1.html>)

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 - Expectations and Responsibilities for Commission Approved Institutions*, 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 or designee
- Directors of Proposed Program(s)
- Partner Employing Organization or Educational Entity
- Other participants deemed necessary by the institution

All travel expenses for attending Accreditation 101 are borne by the institution.

Following completion of the Prerequisites, an institution is required to submit a formal application and may move forward to Stage II – Eligibility Requirements. Institutions moving forward to Stage II by submitting the Eligibility Requirements will be listed on the Commission website for Initial Institution Approval.

STAGE II – Eligibility Requirements

Eligibility Requirements include twelve criteria to which prospective program sponsors must respond. Specific evidence and factors to consider for each of the eligibility requirements will be listed on the Commission’s Initial Institutional Approval website. Once submitted, an institution’s responses to the twelve criteria are reviewed. Responses to criteria 1 through 9 will be reviewed by Commission staff who will then make a recommendation to the Commission. Staff will not make a recommendation to the Commission regarding criteria 10, 11 and 12 but will summarize the information provided by the institution for the Commission. The Commission will make a determination on all criteria and grant an institution one of the following: 1) Eligibility; 2) Eligibility with specific topics to be addressed in Stage III; 3) Resubmission with additional information, or 4) Deny eligibility. A determination of either 1) Eligibility or 2) Eligibility with specific topics to be addressed in Stage III, allows an institution to move forward to Stage III of the Initial Institutional Approval process.

Criterion 1: Responsibility and Authority

The institution clearly identifies the lines of authority and responsibility for any and all educator preparation programs within the institution and provides assurance that only those person(s) employed by the program sponsor will recommend individuals to the Commission for a credential or authorization.

Criterion 2: Lawful Practices

A program of professional preparation must be proposed and operated by an entity that makes all personnel decisions regarding employment, retention or promotion of employees without unlawful discrimination. The entity must make all decisions regarding the admission, retention and graduation of students without unlawful discrimination.

Criterion 3: Commission Assurances and Compliance

The institution assures all of the following:

- a) That there will be compliance with all preconditions required for the initial program(s) the institution would like to propose (General preconditions, initial program preconditions and program-specific preconditions for proposed programs must accompany this document).
- b) 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 being offered including extension divisions.
- c) That it 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 offer the approved program, meeting the adopted standards, until the candidates:
 - 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.

Criterion 4: Requests for Data

The institution 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 5: Grievance Process

The institution has a clearly identified grievance process for handling all candidate grievances in a fair and timely manner. The grievance process is readily accessible for all applicants and candidates and is shared with candidates early in their enrollment in the program.

Criterion 6: Communication and Information

The institution 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. Information will be made available through various means of communication including but not limited to website, institutional catalog, and admission material.

Criterion 7: Student Records Management, Access, and Security

The institution must demonstrate that it will maintain and retain student records. Institutions seeking Initial Institutional Approval will provide verification that:

- 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.

Criterion 8: Disclosure

Institutions must disclose information regarding:

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

Criterion 9: Veracity in all Claims and Documentation Submitted

The institution and its personnel demonstrate 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 10: Mission and Vision

- a) An institution’s mission and vision for educator preparation is consistent with California’s approach to educator preparation.

Criterion 11: 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. Commission staff will research available information about the institution relevant to the application for initial institutional approval. Institutions must submit:

- a) Proof of third party notification enlisting comments to be sent to Input@ctc.ca.gov.

Criterion 12: Capacity and Resources

An institution must submit a Capacity and Resources plan providing information about how it will sustain the educator preparation program(s) through a 2 – 3 year provisional approval (if granted) at a minimum. A plan to teach out candidates if, for some reason, the institution is unable to continue providing educator preparation program(s).

STAGE III – Alignment with all Applicable Standards and Preconditions

Once an institution seeking Initial Institutional Approval receives Commission approval for eligibility following Stage 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 common across all educator preparation 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 Preconditions, Initial Program Preconditions 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 programs 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 Stages 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 determination regarding Provisional Approval. If the Commission determines that the institution is provisionally approved, the program(s) the institution wishes to offer during Provisional Approval must then be approved by the Committee on Accreditation.

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 two to three years, in accordance with the program's design. At a minimum of two years, this timeframe will be adequate for at least 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.

Full Approval

Full Approval 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. Recommendation of the accreditation site team as a result of 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 full approval.

Once granted full approval, the institution will then be required to meet the continuing accreditation procedures adopted by the COA.

II. Initial Approval of Programs

According to the *Accreditation Framework* (Section 2-A-2), the COA is responsible for granting initial approval to new programs of educator preparation. If the COA determines that a program meets all applicable standards, the COA grants initial approval to the program. New credential program proposals by Commission-approved institutions must adhere to all applicable Preconditions. They must also fulfill the Common Standards and one of the program standards options listed in Section Three of the *Framework*: Option One, California Program Standards; Option Two, National or Professional Program Standards; or Option Three, Experimental Program Standards.

Section 4-C of the *Framework* contains the policies for Initial Program Approval. Prior to being presented to the COA for action, new programs proposed by Commission-approved institutions must go through Initial Program Review (IPR). During IPR, new program proposals are reviewed by panels of external experts, and as appropriate, by Commission staff with expertise in the credential area. During IPR, new programs are reviewed in relation to the Preconditions, Common Standards or Common Standards Addendum and the selected program standards. The COA considers recommendations by the external review panels and Commission staff when deciding on the approval of each proposed program.

An institution that selects National or Professional Program Standards (Option Two) should consult the chapter on National or Professional Standards for appropriate procedures. The acceptability of the standards must be approved before the institution prepares a program proposal. An institution may choose to submit a program that meets the Experimental Program Standards (Option Three). See Section Three of the *Framework* for additional information.

Program Submission and Implementation: Basic Steps in the Accreditation of New Programs-Initial Program Review (IPR)

There are specific steps that an approved institution must follow when submitting a program proposal.

- For **subject matter program** document submissions, institutions must follow the process included on the [New Subject Matter Program](#) webpage.
- For **educator preparation program** document submissions, institutions must follow the related process included on the [New Educator Preparation Program](#) webpage.

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

- 1. Review of Preconditions.** Preconditions are requirements necessary to operate an educator preparation program leading to a credential in California. Preconditions are grounded in Education Code, regulations, and Commission policy. An institution's response to the preconditions is reviewed by the Commission's professional staff. If staff determines that the program complies with the requirements of state laws, administrative regulations, and Commission policy, the program is eligible for a further review of the standards by staff or a review panel. If the program does not comply with the preconditions, the proposal is returned to the institution with specific information about the lack of compliance. The institution may resubmit preconditions once the compliance issues have been resolved.
- 2. Review of Common and Program Standards** Unlike the preconditions, the Common Standards and program standards address issues of program quality and effectiveness. The institution's response to the Common Standards (full narrative or Common Standards Addendum as appropriate) and program standards are reviewed by a panel of experts in the field of preparation or by Commission staff. During the Initial Program Review process, there is opportunity for institutional representatives to confer with staff consultants to answer questions or clarify issues that may arise.

Because the review process depends entirely on the participation of experts from the field, the review process can be quite lengthy, especially for lower incidence programs. The Commission asks that each institution identify a minimum of one faculty member for

each program it intends to offer that will be available to be trained and participate in Initial Program Review. This ensures that the review process occurs as quickly as possible. It is highly recommended that institutions volunteer to review documents prior to submission of their own proposal in order to gain the most in-depth understanding of the entire IPR process.

- 3. COA Action** If it is determined that a proposed program aligns to the standards, the program is recommended for initial approval by the COA at one of its regularly scheduled meetings. Action by the COA is communicated to the institution in writing.

If it is determined that the program does not meet the standards, the proposal is returned to the institution with an explanation of the findings. Specific reasons for the decision are communicated to the institution. After changes have been made in the program, the proposal may be submitted for re-consideration. During this process, representatives of the institution can obtain information and assistance from Commission staff.

Appeal of an Adverse Decision

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

If a program is not recommended for approval by the COA, the institution may submit a formal request at least 30 days prior to the COA's next regularly scheduled meeting to the Administrator of Accreditation, who will place that program on the agenda of the COA for consideration. Included in the request, the institution must provide the following information:

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

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

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

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

Appeals to the Executive Director will only be considered on the grounds that the decision of the COA was arbitrary, capricious, unfair, or contrary to the policies of the *Accreditation Framework* or the procedural guidelines of the COA. The appeal must be submitted within twenty (20) business days of the COA’s decision to deny initial approval with appropriate evidence of such. Information related to the quality of the program that was not previously presented to the Commission's staff or the review panel may not be considered by the Commission. The Executive Director will determine whether the evidence submitted by the institution responds to the criteria for appeal. If it does, the Executive Director will forward the appeal to the Commission. If it does not, the institution will be notified of the decision and provided with information describing why the information does adequately meet the criteria. The institution will be given ten business days to re-submit the appeal to the Executive Director.

The appeal, if forwarded to the Commission by the Executive Director, will be heard before the Educator Preparation Committee during a regularly scheduled Commission meeting. The Educator Preparation Committee will consider the written evidence provided by the institution and a written response from the COA. In resolving the appeal, the Commission will take one of the following actions:

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

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

III. Program Status for Approved Programs

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

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

Institution/Program Sponsor	Program Approval Status		
	Active	Inactive	Withdrawn
May Accept New Candidates	Yes	No	No
May Recommend Candidates for a Credential	Yes	Only those already in the program	No
Participates in Data Reporting Requirements	Yes	Yes (if candidates)	No

Institution/Program Sponsor	Program Approval Status		
	Active	Inactive	Withdrawn
		enrolled during reporting period)	
Participates in Program Review	Yes	Modified	No
Participates in Site Visit	Yes	Modified	No
How to Request Reinstatement	NA	Letter to the COA Requesting Re-activation*	New Program Document Submitted and reviewed by BIR members

**See a description of the re-activation process below. If the Commission adopted revised program standards or if new regulations were enacted while the program is in inactive status, a new program document will be required to re-activate a program that reflects new standards and/or regulations.*

Active Programs

Approved Program Sponsors Authorized to Offer California Credentials

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

- All approved programs will participate in the Commission’s accreditation system, in the assigned cohort.
- Annual data collection, analysis, and submission is required.
- In the first and fourth year of the accreditation cycle, programs will submit responses to Preconditions.
- In the fifth year of the accreditation cycle, programs will submit their Program Review Documents and responses to Common Standards
- In the sixth year of the accreditation cycle, programs will participate in the Site Visit activities.
- In the seventh year of the accreditation cycle, programs will participate in the 7th Year Follow-up activities as determined by the COA.

An approved educator preparation program will be identified as such on the Commission’s web page and may be identified as ‘Approved’ on the sponsor’s web page, if applicable.

Newly Approved Program Sponsors Authorized to Offer California Credentials

Once an institution and its programs have gained initial approval, the institution will be assigned to an accreditation cohort. Depending upon the results of the focused site visit during provisional approval, the Administrator of Accreditation will determine where in the cycle is the most appropriate placement and once placed, will be expected to participate in all accreditation activities. New programs at institutions with existing Commission approved programs are expected to participate in accreditation activities in conjunction with their already assigned cohort within the accreditation cycle.

Inactive Programs

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

- The program must have 15 or fewer candidates when it requests inactive status
- The institution or program sponsor notifies the Administrator of Accreditation of its intention to declare the program inactive. The program can be deemed inactive when it no longer accepts new candidates; it is then recognized only for current candidates to complete the program.
- The notification to the Administrator must include the anticipated date that the inactive status will begin (i.e. the date from which candidates will no longer be admitted to the program). This date must be no more than six months from the date of notification.
- Candidates already admitted to the program are notified in writing by the institution or program sponsor that the program is being declared inactive.
- The institution assists enrolled candidates in planning for the completion of their program. A plan regarding how current candidates will complete the program must accompany the inactive request.
- The institution determines the date, by which all enrolled candidates will finish the program, not to exceed a maximum of one year after the anticipated inactive date.
- Following the date after which all current candidates will be able to complete the program, as determined by the institution, the program may no longer operate and the institution may no longer recommend candidates for the credential until such a time as the program is re-activated. The program will not be listed on the Commission's public web page for approved programs. The program will appear as inactive in the Credential Information Guide (CIG).
- An inactive program will be included in accreditation activities in a modified manner as determined by the Administrator of Accreditation.
- An inactive program may be reactivated only when the institution submits a request to the COA and the COA has taken action to reactivate the program. If the program standards under which the program was approved have been modified, or if new regulations have been added, the institution or program sponsor must address the updated standards before the program may be re-activated.

An inactive program may remain in inactive status for no longer than 5 years; after which, the program sponsor must determine whether the program should be withdrawn permanently or reactivated. If the institution does not request reactivation or withdrawal within the 5-year limit, the COA will withdraw the program at its next scheduled meeting. Commission staff will notify the program sponsor at least six months prior to the automatic withdrawal date.

Reactivating an Approved Inactive Educator Preparation Program

An Inactive program cannot be re-activated until the Committee on Accreditation takes action at a regularly scheduled meeting. The program seeking re-activation must adhere to the following procedures:

- Submit a letter requesting reactivation to the COA indicating the requested date of reactivation, why reactivation is being requested and if changes have been made to the program
- Submit all necessary supporting documentation. The type of documentation will vary depending on a number of factors including, but not limited to, the length of time the program has been inactive, personnel changes and curricular changes. The institution will need to contact the Administrator of Accreditation to determine what documentation will be necessary.

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

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

Withdrawal of Credential Programs

An institution may decide to withdraw a program that has been previously approved by the Commission. The withdrawal of a program formalizes that it is no longer part of the institution's accredited program offerings and, from the Commission's perspective, no longer part of the accreditation system. Once a program is withdrawn, it must wait one year after the date of withdrawal before applying to become reaccredited. In order to withdraw a program, the following procedures must be followed:

- The program must have taught out all candidates by the effective date of program withdrawal.
- The institution notifies the Administrator of Accreditation of its intention to withdraw the program at a date when the current candidates have completed the program.
- All Candidates admitted or enrolled in the program are notified in writing by the institution that the program is being withdrawn. The institution determines a date by

which all enrolled candidates will be able to finish the program. The institution assists enrolled candidates in planning for the completion of their program. The institution files the list of candidates and date of their program completion with the Commission.

- Once withdrawn, the program may no longer operate and the institution may no longer recommend candidates for the credential.

Reaccrediting Programs that have been Withdrawn

A withdrawn program may be reaccredited only when the institution submits a new proposal for initial program review (IPR) and is approved by the COA. Institutions must wait at least one year after the program has been formally withdrawn by the COA before requesting reaccreditation of the program. Under extenuating circumstances an institution may petition the COA to waive this requirement.

Discontinuation (or Closure) of Credential Programs by the COA

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

- Within 60 days of action by the COA the institution must submit the institution's plan for program discontinuation for approval by the Administrator of Accreditation.
- Candidates are no longer admitted to the program once the institution is required to discontinue the program.
- Candidates already admitted to the program are notified in writing by the institution that the program is being discontinued. The plan submitted to the Administrator of Accreditation includes a date by which all enrolled candidates will finish the program. The institution helps candidates plan for completion of their program by helping them complete their program at the institution where they are currently enrolled or assisting them with transferring to another institution. The institution files the list of candidates and dates of program completion with the Commission.

A discontinued program may be reaccredited only when the institution submits a new proposal for initial program review (IPR) The institution must wait at least two years after all candidates have completed the program before requesting reaccreditation.

Institutional Closure due to Closure of Programs

When an institution withdraws its last program, it loses approval as an accredited institution. It must wait two years from the date of closure and must then complete all aspects of the Initial Institutional Approval process. In specific instances, and at the request of the institution, the Committee on Accreditation may take action to determine that an institution may remain as an approved program sponsor for a specified amount of time as defined by the COA. As an approved program sponsor, annual accreditation fees would apply.