

Introduction to the Accreditation Handbook

Overview of Accreditation in California

Under the auspices of Senate Bills 148 (Bergeson, 1988) and 655 (Bergeson, 1993), the education community in California launched an initiative to create a professional accreditation and certification system that would contribute to excellence in California public education well into the 21st Century. The Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the nation's oldest independent teaching standards board, has long engaged in credential program reviews. The original *Accreditation Framework*, developed by the Accreditation Advisory Council to replace credential program reviews, represented a unique, pioneering effort to advance the quality of educator preparation through the creation of an integrated accreditation *and* certification system. During 2014-16, the Commission undertook efforts to strengthen and streamline the accreditation system. The 2016 Accreditation Framework details the requirements of the CTC's revised accreditation system and informed this version of the *Handbook*.

The 2016 *Accreditation Framework* substantially changed the accreditation process. This handbook documents the procedures the Committee on Accreditation (COA) has put in place to implement the CTC's Accreditation System. The COA encourages both approved institutions and Board of Institutional Review (BIR) members to utilize this handbook. The COA is committed to providing full disclosure of its accreditation process to all.

The purposes of this accreditation system are

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

This accreditation system for California emphasizes the essential participation of professional educators in the development of accreditation policies and procedures, the conduct of institutional reviews, and the determination of accreditation decisions. The twelve-member COA, carefully selected from a pool of outstanding nominees, embodies the expertise, experiences, and commitment envisioned by the writers of the *Accreditation Framework*.

A Reader's Guide to the Accreditation Handbook

The *Accreditation Framework* calls for the development of an *Accreditation Handbook* that is intended to provide information about all adopted accreditation procedures to both educator preparation institutions preparing for an accreditation visit and accreditation team members who will conduct the visit. Thus, this single document is written for two audiences. The *Handbook* is divided into fifteen chapters. Additional information may be found on the Commission's website.

Chapter One provides specific information about the division of responsibility for professional accreditation matters between the Commission and the COA. Although the legislation that mandated the development of the *Accreditation Framework* gave primary responsibility for making accreditation decisions to the COA, the Commission does have certain tasks to perform in this area. These tasks are delineated in Chapter One. They should be of interest to program sponsors and to team members.

Chapter Two discusses the role of standards in the initial and ongoing accreditation of an institution and of its credential preparation programs.

Chapter Three provides information on the process of initial institutional and program approval.

Chapter Four provides an overview of the accreditation cycle and discusses the purposes and attributes of the cycle.

Chapters Five through Seven discuss the primary elements of the accreditation cycle. Chapter Five discusses the role of the data reporting in the accreditation cycle and provides directions for identifying, analyzing, and submitting the data. Chapter Six describes the Program Review process including and the kinds of documents that will be reviewed by a team of BIR members and how the review is summarized in a Preliminary Report of Findings to the institution prior to the site visit. Chapter Seven provides information to assist institutions in preparing for the institutional site visit and to confirm information provided through data reporting, completer surveys, and the program review. This chapter gives specific information about the actual procedures followed in the conduct of an accreditation visit. These chapters are focused on the on-going activities of the accreditation process, including special circumstances affecting institutions seeking national accreditation, either for their education unit or for individual credential programs.

Chapter Eight discusses the different kinds of accreditation recommendations that can be made by a team depending on the evidence reviewed by the team and as a result of the team's deliberations. The chapter presents the operational implications of each decision and describes what an institution must do to improve its accreditation status.

Chapter Nine addresses the possible follow-up activities that might take place in Year Seven of the accreditation cycle.

Chapters Ten and Eleven describe what team members do before and during a visit. These chapters will be of particular interest to individuals who are trained, or wish to be trained, as Board of Institution Review (BIR) members. Training is required for all potential BIR members and includes online and in-person training, which includes simulations and other instructional activities, as well as the information provided in this chapter. Chapter Eleven focuses on the role of BIR members who are working as a site team and includes information about performing the various team member tasks. The chapter also describes the data collection procedures utilized by team members.

Chapter Twelve discusses the role of the team lead and articulates the particular responsibilities of the team lead while preparing for and conducting a site accreditation visit, and providing the final report to the COA. This chapter focuses on the substantially enhanced role of the Team Lead.

Chapter Thirteen discusses articulation between the state and national accreditation systems and is of primary importance to institutions interested in national accreditation. Institutions may opt for a joint state and national accreditation visit. All institutions are urged to review these options carefully before determining if this option is appropriate for their own accreditation needs.

Chapter Fourteen discusses the on-going evaluation of the accreditation system.

Chapter Fifteen provides information regarding revisits. The COA may determine that a revisit is necessary during Year Seven of the accreditation cycle for institutions that had significant issues during the Year Six site visit.

The *Handbook* is available on the Commission [website](#) and is divided in separate chapters. The *Accreditation Handbook* has been produced in a manner that will foster revisions and updates. The COA intends this document to reflect its procedures and expects to make revisions in those procedures as the professional accreditation process continues. The *Handbook* will be revised periodically. The COA welcomes comments and suggestions for improving its *Accreditation Handbook*.