

**Proposed Language for the *Accreditation Handbook*
Related to Noncompliance with Preconditions
Chapter 4: The Accreditation Cycle
March 2017**

Introduction

This agenda item presents Chapter 4 of the *Accreditation Handbook* for COA consideration and possible adoption

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the COA vote to approve the proposed revisions to Chapter 4 for posting on the Commission's accreditation website, with the inclusion of any edits provided at this meeting by the COA.

Background

As part of the Commission's effort to strengthen and streamline the accreditation system, the [General Preconditions](#) were updated and revisions to the accreditation cycle were adopted to provide for more frequent reviews of Preconditions. The [Accreditation Framework](#), adopted in 2016, reflects these changes. Institutions are now required to submit general and program-specific preconditions by March 31st in Year One and Year Four of the accreditation cycle. Institutions from the Yellow, Green, and Violet accreditation cohorts are due March 31, 2017.

Preconditions are requirements grounded in statute, regulations and/or Commission policy. Institutions must provide a response to each precondition and include appropriate supporting evidence and/or documentation. Preconditions pertain to issues of compliance and are reviewed by staff.

The Committee on Accreditation is currently notified when documents related to accreditation are late. This notification will include the late submission of Preconditions. However, currently the *Accreditation Handbook* is silent regarding what action, should be taken in the event that an institution's response does not adequately comply with one or more preconditions. In recent years, the COA has indicated its desire to mandate more immediate correction if an institution is found to be out of compliance with a precondition. In general, when institutions are found to be out of alignment with standards after a site visit, they have a year to demonstrate that they have taken corrective measures to address the stipulations (7th year follow up). However, because preconditions are a matter of policy and are often grounded in Education Code, regulations, or other policy, the COA has sought clarification in the Commission's processes to ensure that an institution is taking immediate corrective action on matters involving preconditions.

Staff is proposing language be included in Chapter Four of the *Accreditation Handbook*, specifying that at the point in time that the issue of noncompliance with one or more of the

preconditions (General, program-specific, or both) was determined, staff would notify the institution of its noncompliance and require immediate corrective action be taken with a response required from the institution within 10 days. In addition, this matter would be brought to the COA to determine any additional appropriate action at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Because preconditions are due at the end of March, and the COA generally meets in April and June, this would allow for timely intervention when an institution is out of compliance with one or more preconditions.

An excerpt of Chapter Four with proposed edits follows (underlined). The full text of Chapter Four is in Appendix A. The text of the General Preconditions can be found in Appendix B. Program specific preconditions are available on the Commission's [website](#).

Excerpt from Chapter 4 (p. 3):

Preconditions Review

During Year One and Year Four of the accreditation cycle institutions must respond to all relevant preconditions which are grounded in statute, regulations and/or Commission policy, for each approved program.

Staff will review responses to all preconditions. If it is determined that an institution is out of compliance with one or more preconditions, the institution will be notified as soon as possible with a requirement that the institution act within 10 days to rectify the matter. The report findings will be presented to the COA to determine what additional action should be taken in the event that the review finds that one or more responses do not comply with preconditions or the institution fails to act within the 10 days to comply. Action will depend on the severity of noncompliance, up to and including the determination of the need for a Focused Site Visit or suspension of credential recommendations.

Questions for Discussion

1. Does the proposed language provide COA with adequate flexibility to take appropriate action?

Next Steps

Should the COA approve Chapter 4, with or without edits, the staff will finalize the document and post it on the website.

Appendix A

Chapter Four The Accreditation Cycle

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the accreditation cycle which is comprised of several major activities. These activities and their purposes are briefly described below. In the following chapters each activity is reviewed in more detail. The underlying expectation of the accreditation process is that all accredited programs are implemented such that they align with the Commission's adopted standards and are engaged in continuous, on-going collection of data about candidate competence and program effectiveness, are analyzing the data, and are using the results to make programmatic improvements. Taken as a whole, the elements of the accreditation cycle prepare the institution and the accreditation review team to identify an institution's strengths and any areas needing improvement.

I. Purpose

The overarching goal of the accreditation system is to ensure that educator preparation programs are aligned with the Preconditions, Common Standards and all relevant Program Standards which require, among other things, that institutions develop comprehensive data collection systems to support continuous program improvement and to demonstrate candidates' knowledge and skills for educating and supporting all students in meeting the state-adopted academic standards. The graphic on the next page (Figure 1) emphasizes the continuous nature of the accreditation system.

Four primary purposes are achieved through the accreditation system. First, the process creates a mechanism by which educator preparation programs, their institutions, and the COA are held accountable to the public and to the education profession. Through participation in the accreditation process, educator preparation programs document their adherence to educator preparation standards and their use of data for on-going analyses of program effectiveness. Second, the cycle supports institutions' adherence to appropriate program standards, generally the Commission-adopted teacher preparation standards. Third, by requiring institutions to use data to identify areas needing improvement, the accreditation process helps ensure high quality educator preparation programs. Fourth, the accreditation cycle encourages institutions to create and utilize systematic and comprehensive evaluation processes to ensure their candidates are well qualified for teaching or specialist services credentials and that their programs are providing the rigorous content and pedagogical preparation new teachers and other educators need to be successful.

II. Overview

The accreditation process is a seven-year cycle of activities. Figure 1, below, illustrates the accreditation cycle of activities. These activities include annual data analysis, preconditions review, Common Standards review, program review, the site visit, and seventh-year follow up activities. Each educator preparation institution has been assigned to a cohort. Each cohort is on a specific seven-year cycle. A list of Cohort assignments as well as summaries of accreditation activities (cohort maps) for each cohort can be found on the Commission's [accreditation webpage](#). Institutions are, therefore, at different points in the accreditation cycle, depending on their assigned cohort. The cohort model distributes the workload of the Commission, its staff, and the Board of Institutional Review (BIR) members, which is composed of trained education professionals who review program documents and conduct the accreditation site visits. A brief overview of each activity will be provided in this chapter. For a full description and guidance on preparing for each activity, please see the appropriate chapters for each activity.

Figure 1 Accreditation cycle of activities

CHART OF ACCREDITATION CYCLE



Annual Data Analysis

The purpose of annual data analysis is to ensure that institutions are collecting and analyzing candidate and program data on a regular basis and that program improvement activities are being identified based on the results of the analysis.

Data and analysis collected by an institution will be reported annually, and uploaded to the Commission data warehouse. Each program analyzes their data and identifies program strengths and concerns in regard to candidate competence and program effectiveness, to determine if any programmatic changes are needed. Subsequent analysis will give the institution an opportunity to report on changes that were implemented as a result of prior analysis.

Preconditions Review

During Year One and Year Four of the accreditation cycle institutions must respond to all relevant preconditions which are grounded in statute, regulations and/or Commission policy, for each approved program.

Staff will review responses to all preconditions. If it is determined that an institution is out of compliance with one or more preconditions, the institution will be notified as soon as possible with a requirement that the institution act within 10 days to rectify the matter. The report findings will be presented to the COA to determine what additional action should be taken in the event that the review finds that one or more responses do not comply with preconditions or the institution fails to act within the 10 days to comply. Action will depend on the severity of noncompliance, up to and including the determination of the need for a Focused Site Visit or suspension of credential recommendations.

Common Standards and Program Review

During Year Five of the accreditation cycle institutions must respond to the Common Standards and complete Program Review. Program Review is the activity during which key program documents are reviewed to determine whether the educator preparation program appears to be aligned to program standards.

During an institution's Program Review, each of its educator preparation programs submit documents demonstrating how the program meets the relevant program standards. The Program Review includes:

- a. **Submission of Program Documents.** An Institution/program sponsor submits required documentation including, but not limited to, the key categories: Program Description, Organizational Structure, Qualifications of Faculty and Instructional Personnel, Course Sequence, Course Matrix, Fieldwork and Clinical Practice. Additional documentation may be required specific to each credential area.
- b. **Review of Program Document and Preliminary Report of Findings.** Trained members of the Board of Institutional Reviewers serve as reviewers and consider all information and

determine preliminary findings for all program standards. Documents will be reviewed once with feedback in the form of the *Preliminary Report of Findings* provided to the institution. An institution must prepare an addendum based upon the preliminary findings and make the addendum available to the site visit team prior to the accreditation site visit.

- c. **Use of Results.** The Preliminary Report of Findings provides a basis for an accreditation site visit team's review of the program's implementation in year six. Findings will be used to determine the type, size and complexity of the programs to be reviewed and the structure, size and expertise of the site visit review team to be selected.

Site Visit

The Site Visit takes place in year six of the accreditation cycle. The site visit allows a BIR team to verify information from the institution's annual data analysis, Preconditions, Common Standards, and Program Review processes for the purpose of making findings about the extent to which an institution and its programs meet the Preconditions, Common Standards and Program Standards and to generate an accreditation recommendation. The team performs interviews with samples of stakeholders from each of an institution's programs and completes limited document reviews to confirm or refute information from the other sources. The team also examines evidence about the institution's policies and practices as they impact educator preparation programs. Based upon the findings of these activities, an accreditation recommendation is made to the COA.

Institutions are assigned a state consultant approximately one year in advance of the site visit in order to help them prepare for the visit. The Administrator of Accreditation works with each institution to establish the visit dates, site team size and configuration. During this time, the institution prepares electronic copies of all its documentation which can be accessed by the entire site visit team.

Follow Up

In year seven of the accreditation cycle, institutions provide follow up information from the site visit findings per the COA's accreditation decision.

III. Cohort Activities

All approved educator preparation sponsors are assigned to one of seven cohorts. Each institution can find its cohort assignment and corresponding accreditation activity by year at the Commission's [Accreditation Schedule and Activities](#) webpage.

Appendix B

General Institutional Preconditions

General Statement Applicable to all Preconditions for all Educator Preparation Programs

Pursuant to Education Code Section 44227 (and 44265 where applicable for Education Specialist Program) each program of professional preparation that leads to a teaching or services credential shall adhere continually to the following requirements of California State Law or Commission Policy. Each institution must respond to the general preconditions as well as all other applicable program specific preconditions.

(1) Accreditation and Academic Credit. The program(s) must be operated by

(a) **Institutions of higher education:** A college or university that (i) is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges or another of the six regional accrediting associations, and (ii) grants baccalaureate academic credit or post baccalaureate academic credit, or both. An institution approved to offer educator preparation in California must notify the Commission within 30 days if its regional accreditation status changes.

(b) **School districts or other non-regionally accredited entities:** The Superintendent or CEO of the district or entity shall submit verification of the governing board's approval of sponsorship of the program.

(2) Enrollment and Completion. Once a candidate is accepted and enrolls in an educator preparation program, the approved program 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 based on established criteria; **or**
- iv. is admitted to another approved program to complete the requirements, with minimal disruption, for the authorization.

In the event the program closes, a teach out plan, which includes individual transition plans for each candidate as well as a plan for candidates and graduates to access their student records would need to be developed.

(3) Responsibility and Authority. To be granted continuing accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the entity shall provide the following information:

(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 an extension division, if any).

(b) Provide a description of the reporting relationship between the positions described in (a) and the individual(s) who coordinate each educator preparation program offered by the entity. If a reporting relationship is indirect, describe the levels of authority and responsibility for each educator preparation program. Include 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 any aspect of program delivery.

(c) Provide policies to ensure that duties regarding credential recommendations are provided solely by persons who are current employees of the Commission approved institution.

(4) Lawful Practices. To be granted continuing accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, a program of professional preparation must be proposed and operated by an entity that makes all personnel decisions without unlawful discrimination. These decisions include decisions regarding the admission, retention or graduation of students, and decisions regarding the employment, retention or promotion of employees.

(5) Commission Assurances. To be granted continuing accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the program sponsor must: (a) assure that the sponsor will fulfill all of the applicable standards of program quality and effectiveness that have been adopted by the Commission, (b) assure that the approved program sponsor will cooperate in an evaluation of the program by an external team or a monitoring of the program by a Commission staff member, and (c) assure that the approved program sponsor will participate fully in the Commission's accreditation system, including the timely submission of documents required for accreditation.

(6) Requests for Data. To be granted continuing accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the entity must identify a qualified officer responsible for reporting and responding to all requests from the Commission for data including, but not limited to, program enrollments, program completers, examination results, including performance assessments, and state and federal reporting within the time limits specified by the Commission. Institutional contact information must be updated annually.

(7) Veracity in all Claims and Documentation Submitted. To be granted continuing accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the entity must positively affirm the veracity of all statements and documentation submitted to the Commission.

(8) Grievance Process. To be granted continuing accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the approved program sponsor must have a clearly delineated grievance process for candidates and applicants. The grievance process information must be accessible to all candidates and applicants and the institution must be prepared to provide documentation that

candidates have been informed of the grievance process and that the process has been followed.

(9) Faculty and Instructional Personnel Participation. All faculty and instructional personnel employed by colleges and universities who regularly teach one or more courses in an educator preparation program leading to a credential, shall actively participate in the public school system at least once every three academic years, appropriate to their credential area. Faculty who are not in the Department, School or College of Education are exempt from this requirement. *Reference: Education Code Section 44227.5 (a) and (b).*

(10) Communication and Information. To be granted continuing accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the approved program sponsor must provide easily accessible and accurate information to the public, prospective educators, and enrolled candidates about the requirements for admission and successful completion for all its educator preparation programs.

(11) Student Records Management, Access, and Security. To be granted continuing accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the sponsor must demonstrate that it will maintain and retain student records in accordance with the institution's record retention policy. Institutions will provide verification that:

(a) Candidates and graduates 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.

(12) Disclosure. Institutions must disclose information regarding any outside organizations that will be providing any direct educational services as all or part of the educator preparation programs sponsored by the institution and identify the type of services the outside organization will provide.