

## **Discussion of Possible Refinements of Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval Process October 2021**

### **Overview of this Report**

This agenda item opens for further discussion the idea of possible refinements to Stage V of the IIA process and presents a summary of the COA's discussion from the August 2021 meeting when this topic was first introduced by staff.

### **Staff Recommendation**

This item is for discussion only. No action is needed at this time. Following the Committee's discussion, staff may draft an agenda item for Commission consideration of possible revisions to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval process.

### **Background**

California Education Code §44372(c) sets forth the Commission's responsibility to rule on the eligibility of an applicant for initial accreditation for the purpose of offering a program of educator preparation. The Commission has established the IIA process whereby an institution seeking to offer one or more educator preparation programs in California must first become an approved program sponsor by satisfactorily completing the five stages of the IIA process.

An institution that is granted Provisional Approval by the Commission in Stage III of IIA, and subsequently approved by the COA to offer its proposed credential program(s) in Stage IV, is required to host a Provisional Site Visit the year after its first cohort of candidates completes the program. The conclusion of the IIA process is the determination by the Commission of whether to grant or deny the institution Full Approval (Stage V).

Pursuant to the Accreditation Framework, "The Commission may grant or deny full institutional approval or may grant institutional approval with a requirement that the COA's draft stipulations must be addressed and presented to the COA for action within a designated timeframe." There are four levels of action that can be taken on an institution seeking full institutional approval at the conclusion of Stage V of the IIA process:

1. **Full Approval:** If the Commission grants full approval, the Administrator of Accreditation will assign the institution to one of the seven established accreditation cohorts, and the institution will participate in all activities of the seven-year accreditation cycle established by the Commission.
2. **Granting full approval with a requirement that COA's draft stipulations must be addressed** will remand the issues back to the COA for follow up to ensure that the program has sufficiently addressed all concerns raised by the site visit team.
3. Alternatively, the Commission may **keep the institution in the provisional stage of the approval process for another year** while the institution works with staff to address all stipulations. In this case, the COA will consider any quarterly or year-out reports on the institution's progress in meeting stipulations, as it does with fully approved institutions,

and, within one year, make a new accreditation determination. At that time, the new decision of the COA will come back to the Commission for its decision.

4. **Denial:** If the Commission denies full approval, the Administrator of Accreditation will inform the institution that it is no longer permitted to admit additional candidates to its programs and will work with the institution to develop a teach-out plan for any current candidates.

The IIA process is still relatively new and only a small number of institutions have completed the final stage. In working with these institutions, staff has encountered a few issues with respect to the Stage V process that could benefit from refinement. While the authority for IIA rests with the Commission, as does establishing policy in this area, the COA policies and procedures regarding site visits and decision-making are critical to this part of the process.

### **Summary of Discussion from the August 2021 COA Meeting**

During the discussion of Stage V at the August 2021 COA meeting, two main refinements came into focus.

*Refinement #1:* Add another aspect to the COA's recommendation to the Commission following its review of a provisional site visit report.

Currently, the COA makes an accreditation recommendation to the Commission, but staff makes the recommendation for Commission action on one of the four actions listed above. By refining this process so that, in addition to an accreditation recommendation, the COA would also give a recommendation on one of the four Commission actions listed above, the role of the COA as the Commission's appointed accrediting body is strengthened and staff is not left to interpret for the Commission its best course of action based on COA action.

During its August discussion, COA members signaled support for this refinement.

*Refinement #2:* Maintain COA oversight of institutions that receive less than 'Accreditation' following a provisional site visit.

As the process is currently formulated, the COA puts forward every institution to the Commission regardless of the results of the provisional site visit. In cases where the COA has deliberated on the provisional site visit report and would make a determination of 'Accreditation' or 'Denial' the Commission's subsequent decision regarding the overall status of an institution is clear. However, in cases where the COA would include stipulations, the Commission is tasked with evaluating and weighing the stipulations to determine its course of action. The Commission must consider the number and discern the severity of the stipulations and decide if the institution should be remanded back to the COA to address the issues or remain in provisional status for another year while working to address the issues. In either case, the institution must address the stipulations. One of the purposes of the COA, as the Commission's appointed body, is to evaluate the alignment of institutions and their programs to the Commission's adopted standards. Therefore, staff is asking the COA to consider whether

and in what circumstances it might hold an institution in Stage V of IIA under COA purview. For instance, would the COA prefer an institution to remain under its purview until such time as the institution has addressed all stipulations? In such a case, if the Commission agrees with this change in policy, the COA would put forward to the Commission only those institutions that have demonstrated full alignment to the standards.

During its discussion at the August 2021 meeting, COA members brought up these points and requested staff return this topic to the COA for further discussion.

### **Issues for Discussion**

In considering whether and under what circumstances an institution in Stage V of IIA might be promoted to the Commission for final approval or denial or held under the purview of the COA, the following considerations were posed by COA members at the August 2021 meeting. These do not represent all issues that may need to be considered, however.

- Would the COA hold all institutions that receive any level of stipulations – Stipulations, Major Stipulations, Probationary Stipulations?
  - Depending on the nature of the stipulations, should these institutions stay in provisional approval status for up to an additional year, automatically?
  - Is there a difference in the answer to this question depending on the level of stipulation?
- If one or more stipulations could be addressed in a short amount of time, and, depending on the nature of the stipulation(s), should action #2 above remain?
  - In other words, does the COA foresee a point where they would recommend full approval for an institution in Stage V of IIA that had an accreditation recommendation from the provisional site visit team of less than accreditation?

Staff looks forward to the Committee's discussion to inform next steps in considering revisions to the IIA process to improve effectiveness.

### Five Stages of the Initial Institutional Approval Process

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: • 12 Eligibility Criteria	Submit responses to: • Preconditions • Common Standards	Submit responses to: • Program Standards	Institution must: • Collect data • Host provisional site visit
<b>Reviewed By</b>	Staff	Staff	Preconditions: Staff Common Standards: BIR	BIR	Site Visit Team and 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
<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