

Chapter Two: Standards in Accreditation

Introduction

This chapter describes the role of the Preconditions, Common Standards, and Program Standards in the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (Commission) accreditation system. The chapter also discusses how standards are developed, how standards are revised, and how institutions and other program sponsors are affected when standards are revised.

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Preconditions, Common and Program Standards

There are foundational requirements that institutions and credential programs that prepare professional educators in California are expected to address at all times: 1) Preconditions, 2) Common Standards, and 3) Program Standards.

A. Preconditions are requirements grounded in statute, regulations and/or Commission policy. Therefore, it is expected institutions and programs be in compliance at all times with preconditions. Programs must provide documentation that demonstrates it is complying with each General precondition and all credential-specific preconditions for each Commission approved program offered by the institution. Although a review of the preconditions takes place in years 1 and 4 of the accreditation cycle by staff, if an institution is found to be out of compliance at any time by any review team member, the COA or staff, then COA may take appropriate action against the institution such as place stipulations upon the institution or deny accreditation.

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B. Common Standards address aspects of program quality that should be common across all educator preparation programs offered by an institution. This category includes standards relevant to the institution's overall vision for, and leadership of, educator preparation programs within the institution. The Common Standards also embody expectations about the distribution and availability of resources across different programs, the quality of faculty, and the adequacy of admissions and advising procedures. An institution provides documentation that demonstrates it operates in alignment with each Common Standard, including information about individual programs when necessary.

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C. Program Standards address the quality of program features that are specific to a credential. These include program design, assessments, curriculum, field experiences, and the knowledge and skills to be demonstrated by candidates in the specific credential area. There are three program standards options available to institutions intending to offer an educator preparation program: Commission adopted program standards, national professional association standards, and experimental standards. While most programs are aligned to the Commission adopted standards, there are situations in which one of the other options may be appropriate. These other options

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are subject to specific requirements or conditions. Institutions may select from the following options for program-specific standards.

- **Option 1. California Program Standards.** The Commission appoints panels of experts from colleges, universities and local education authorities (LEAs) to develop program standards for specific credential programs. These panels are guided by current research findings pertinent to that credential, the California K-12 academic content standards, and the most current edition of the curriculum frameworks. They also consider standards developed by appropriate national and statewide professional organizations. If the national or professional standards are found to be appropriate for California, the panel may recommend that the Commission adopt them in lieu of developing new standards or revising the Commission's existing standards. After reviewing the recommendations of advisory panels and other experts, the Commission adopts program standards for the initial and continuing accreditation of credential preparation programs. When revised program standards are adopted, institutions offering programs aligned to the former standards must be aligned to the revised standards within a timeline set by the Commission. Staff provides information and technical assistance regarding transitioning to new standards, including a timeline to institutions sponsoring the affected programs.
- **Option Two. National or Professional Program Standards.** California institutions may propose to use program standards that have been developed by national or state professional organizations. These standards must be approved for use by the Committee on Accreditation (COA) to the extent that the proposed standards are comparable to those adopted by the Commission under Option One (California Program Standards). The analysis of comparability between national and California standards can be performed by the institution prior to submitting a request to the COA, by the national or professional organization, or by Commission staff following a request to use the National or Professional Standards. Such a proposal may be submitted to the COA with a statement of the institution's reasons for requesting this option and a copy of the proposed national or professional program standards.

If the COA determines that the proposed standards are comparable to the California program standards, the COA will approve the proposed standards for use as program standards in the initial and continuing accreditation of the credential program. If the COA determines that the requested standards do not adequately address one or more aspects of the California Standards (Common and/or Program), the COA may approve the requested standards for use but California institutions choosing to use these standards must also address the additional aspects found in the California Standards that may be lacking in the national or professional standards. An institution would be

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required to submit an alignment matrix that provides any information not included in the national program standards. The COA could also determine that the national or professional standards are not appropriate and deny their use for initial and ongoing accreditation purposes.

- **Option Three. Experimental Program Standards.** For initial accreditation, an institution may present an experimental program proposal that meets the Experimental Program Standards adopted by the Commission pursuant to Education Code Section 44273. The Experimental Program Standards were designed to facilitate the development of innovative programs that are likely to expand the knowledge base about effective educator preparation practices. Experimental programs must have a research component to allow the investigation of focused research questions about key aspects of educator preparation. For a copy of the Experimental Program Standards and additional information about this option, see the [Commission's website](#). In addition to a research focus, experimental program proposals must ensure that candidates completing the experimental program would possess the same knowledge and skills required by the Commission-adopted Program Standards (Option One) for the same credential. Approved experimental programs must report findings related to their research component on a biennial basis to the Commission. Upon consultation with the institution and with the COA, the COA retains the authority to determine whether the findings support continuance of the experimental program under the experimental standards.

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The institution must select the type of program standards it will use to seek initial program approval and future program accreditation. If the institution intends to use Option 2 and 3, the institution has an obligation to notify the Commission prior to submitting Program Review. This selection will also guide the assignment and orientation of program reviewers. Once a program standard option has been chosen, the institution must respond to each standard in the selected option by providing program-specific information for review by the program reviewers.

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II. Process of Program Standards Development and Revision

The initial development [and revisions](#) of the Preconditions, Common and Program Standards utilizes panels of experts in educator preparation and practicing educators from colleges, universities, school districts and other educational entities. The panel members use information from current, respected research in the relevant areas, California's adopted K-12 academic content standards, and current curriculum frameworks to craft standards that ensure that credential holders will be able to work effectively with California's highly diverse students and families. As appropriate, the panel also reviews standards developed by national and statewide professional organizations.

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III. Requirements for Institutions When Standards are Revised

Institutions with educator preparation programs aligned to previous standards will be required to update their programs in accordance with the Commission's established timeline for transitioning to new standards. As each set of program standards is updated, specific directions will be provided to institutions about the transition requirements and timeline in which they must update their program and program documents. At the time of adoption, the Commission will determine whether the changes are significant and warrant requiring institutions to update their documents for a review process outside of the regularly scheduled accreditation activities; if not, allow institutions to update their documents within the current accreditation cycle.

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