

Chapter Three: Part B Program Approval

Due to the extent of proposed changes this chapter is not presented in tracked changes

Introduction

This chapter describes the processes by which an institution is granted approval to offer educator preparation programs, how those programs are approved, and how an approved program can change its status to inactive or withdrawn and what those changes mean. These topics are covered in the following three sections of this chapter:

Section A: Initial Institutional Approval

Section B: Program Approval

Section C: Program Change of Status

Section B: Program Approval

According to Section 4 of the [Accreditation Framework](#) the Committee on Accreditation (COA) is responsible for granting approval to new educator preparation programs for Commission-approved institutions. If the COA determines that a program meets all applicable standards, the COA grants initial approval to the program.

Program Approval is when institutions fully approved by the Commission are granted approval to offer new educator preparation programs. Section 4-C of the *Accreditation Framework* contains the policy for Program Approval which states, “New educator preparation program proposals by institutions that have been approved by the Commission must complete responses to 1) all relevant Preconditions established by state law and by the Commission; 2) Common Standards that address how the new program will integrate into the existing education unit structure; and 3) the appropriate set of Program Standards for the program being proposed.”

The process by which program proposals are submitted and reviewed prior to being presented to the COA for action is Initial Program Review (IPR). During IPR, new program proposals for each proposed program as identified on the IPR webpage are reviewed by qualified volunteer reviewers, and as appropriate, by Commission staff with expertise in the credential area. The COA considers recommendations by the reviewers and Commission staff when deciding on the approval of each proposed program.

Program Proposal Submission

As stated in the *Accreditation Framework*, new credential program proposals by Commission-approved institutions must adhere to all applicable Preconditions. They must also align to the Common Standards and meet one of the three program standards options noted in Section Three of the *Accreditation Framework*:

Option One: California Program Standards

Option Two: National or Professional Program Standards

Option Three: Experimental Program Standards

An institution that selects National or Professional Program Standards (Option Two) should consult

the *Accreditation Handbook* 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.

New credential program proposals by Commission-approved institutions must also adhere to requisite steps for the identified program:

- Institutions interested in proposing a new subject matter program must follow the process described on the [New Subject Matter Program webpage](#).
- Institutions interested in proposing a new educator preparation program must follow the process described on the [New Educator Preparation Program webpage](#).

Program Proposal Review

The Commission, its staff, and the COA follow a required process for reviewing proposals from institutions intending to sponsor new educator preparation programs. During this process, there are multiple opportunities for institutional representatives to confer with staff consultants to answer questions or clarify issues that arise.

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 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: Common Standards and Program Standards address issues of program quality and effectiveness. The institution's responses to the Common Standards (full narrative or Common Standards Addendum as appropriate) and Program Standards are reviewed by a qualified volunteer reviewers in the field of preparation or by Commission staff.

Because the review process depends heavily on the participation of qualified volunteer reviewers, 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 who will be available to be trained for and participate in Initial Program Review. This ensures a high number of reviewers which, in turn, helps 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 approval by the COA at one of its regularly scheduled meetings. The action taken 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. After changes have been made in the program, the proposal may be resubmitted for reconsideration.

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, responses to the Common Standards and/or responses to the 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 for appeal at least thirty (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 appeal of 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 appeal request.

The COA will review the information and take action on one of the following:

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

The *second appeal* is 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. Information related to the quality of the program that was not previously presented to the Commission's staff or the review panel will 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 not adequately meet the criteria. The institution will be given ten (10) business days to resubmit the appeal to the Executive Director.

The appeal, if forwarded to the Commission by the Executive Director, will be heard during a

regularly scheduled Commission meeting. The Commission will consider the written evidence provided by the institution and the 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.