

# **Modifications to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval Process and Subsequent Updates to Chapter 3 of the Accreditation Handbook**

## **Overview**

This agenda item presents for Committee review modifications to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval process and subsequent updates to Chapter 3 of the Accreditation Handbook, respectively. The Commission took action at its April 2022 meeting to approve the modifications to Stage V of the IIA process, as presented in this item. Based on the modifications, updates to Chapter 3 of the Accreditation Handbook are needed. Those updates are also presented in this item for COA review and possible approval at a future COA meeting along with all the other proposed revised Accreditation Handbook chapters.

## **Recommendation**

That the Committee on Accreditation review the updates to Chapter 3 of the Accreditation Handbook.

## **Background**

### *Modifications to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval Process*

The COA began discussion of possible modifications to Stage V of the Initial Institutional Approval process at its August 2021 meeting. Subsequent discussions were had at the COA meeting in October 2021 and a finalized version of the modifications was approved by the COA at its February 2022 meeting. The proposed modifications were then presented to the Commission for its approval at the April 2022 Commission meeting by Commission staff and COA Co-Chair Robert Frelly and the Commission took action to adopt them. The modifications are first described and then illustrated below.

Institutions that receive Accreditation or Denial of Accreditation following a provisional site visit would be moved to the Commission at the next soonest meeting following the COA's decision.

Institutions that receive Accreditation with Stipulations following a provisional site visit would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. The COA would determine whether to put the institution forward to the Commission or retain it under the purview of the COA to provide oversight and guidance while the institution addresses the stipulations. For example, institutions with multiple stipulations or one or two stipulations that are slightly more serious would be retained in provisional status under the purview of the COA while ones with stipulations that can be addressed more easily would be put forward for full approval by the Commission.

Institutions that receive Accreditation with Major Stipulations or Probationary Stipulations would automatically be retained under the purview of the COA to provide oversight and guidance while the institution addresses the stipulations.

Any institution retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations would be held for a period of not more than one year, possibly less, beginning from the time of the institution's appearance before the COA and the COA's vote on its accreditation status. After one year the

institution would appear before the Commission regardless of the status of its accreditation or any remaining stipulations at that time.

All institutions retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations would be required to submit progress reports to the COA providing evidence that appropriate actions are being taken to address the stipulations in a timely manner. These reports shall be at least quarterly but may be more frequent, as determined by the COA.

Institutions retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations would remain in provisional status and would not be permitted to proposed new programs. This recommendation would be a new requirement and is based on the recommendation of staff and COA that an institution that is newly implementing programs should continue to focus on bringing those programs into alignment with Commission standards before seeking to add additional new programs.

Institutions that have been retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations and that have done so to the satisfaction of COA, would be moved to the Commission at the next soonest meeting, or the next most feasible meeting, following the COA’s decision to lift the stipulations or at the end of the year regardless of their status.

The following table illustrates the modifications above:

<b>Accreditation Decision</b>	<b>Move to Commission</b>	<b>Follow-up Reports</b>	<b>Permit New Programs?</b>
Accreditation	Yes	N/A	Yes
Accreditation with Stipulations	Determined case-by-case	Yes	Not if retained by COA
Accreditation with Major Stipulations	No	Yes	No
Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations	No	Yes	No
Denial of Accreditation	Yes	N/A	No

*Updates to the Accreditation Handbook*

Accreditation Handbook Chapter 3: Institutional and Program Approval and Change of Status includes a description of the process by which an institution may gain initial institutional approval from the Commission, thereby allowing the institution to propose specific credential preparation programs by the COA. This chapter must therefore be updated to reflect the recently approved modifications to the Initial Institutional Approval process. The COA reviewed and discussed proposed changes to Chapter 3 at its February 2022 meeting. The proposed new updates to Chapter 3 with the Stage V modifications are presented below for COA review and discussion. The updates are shown in track changes within the text of the already revised Chapter 3.

## Chapter Three

### 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 A: Initial Institutional Approval

Pursuant to Section 4 of the *Accreditation Framework*, the Commission is responsible for determining the eligibility of a postsecondary education institution, local education agency (LEA), or other entity that is not currently approved to prepare educators for California's public schools. In order to be eligible to offer an educator preparation program, institutions must complete the Initial Institutional Approval (IIA) process.

The IIA process has been organized into the following five stages:

- I) Prerequisites
- II) Eligibility Requirements
- III) Common Standards, Preconditions, and Provisional Approval
- IV) Program Standards and Program Approval
- V) Provisional Site Visit and Full Approval

Action taken by the Commission, COA, and/or Commission staff after completion of each stage determines if an institution is eligible to continue to the next stage of the IIA process.

### STAGE I – Prerequisites

#### *Prerequisite 1*

Institutions interested in seeking Initial Institutional Approval to become a program sponsor must identify which of the following applies to their institution.

- The institution is accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges or another of the six regional accrediting associations. A copy of a letter from the accrediting association must be submitted as verification.
- The institution is a public school, school district, or county office of education and has received approval of sponsorship from the agency's governing board. Verification must be submitted in the form of a letter or board minutes signed by the superintendent or CEO of the agency.
- The institution is neither of the above and is preparing to offer STEM (Science,

Technology, Engineering and Math) programs pursuant to Education Code §44227.2. Additional requirements, as noted on the [Commission's webpage](#), are necessary for institutions applying under this category.

### **Prerequisite 2**

Prior to accepting an application for IIA, the Commission requires that the institution send a team to *Accreditation 101 - Expectations and Responsibilities for Commission Approved Institutions*, a professional training that provides information regarding eligibility and outlines the expectations and responsibilities of Commission-approved program sponsors including reporting requirements, applicable program standards, annual accreditation fees, credential recommendation and student record responsibilities, and other expectations for Commission-approved institutions that sponsor educator preparation in California.

Required attendees include:

- Unit Head
- Directors of Proposed Program(s)
- Partner Employing Organization or Educational Entity\*
- Other participants deemed necessary by the institution

\*Though not required, it is strongly suggested that a representative from the partner entity attend Accreditation 101 for all preparation programs.

Accreditation 101 may be held virtually or in-person. If the training is held in-person, all travel expenses for attending Accreditation 101 are borne by the institution.

Following completion of the Prerequisites in Stage I, an institution is required to submit a formal application and may move forward to Stage II – Eligibility Requirements.

### **STAGE II – Eligibility Requirements**

Eligibility Requirements include twelve criteria to which prospective program sponsors must respond. An evidence guidance document containing specific evidence needed to respond to each eligibility requirement is provided on the [Commission's IIA Stage II webpage](#). Once submitted, an institution's responses to the twelve criteria are reviewed. Responses to criteria 1 through 9 will be reviewed by Commission staff who will then make a recommendation to the Commission. Staff will not make a recommendation to the Commission regarding criteria 10, 11, and 12 but will provide information from the institution's submission for the Commission's consideration. The Commission will review the information provided on the institution's response to each criterion and will make a motion to either grant or deny eligibility to proceed to Stage III. An institution that is denied eligibility may choose to reapply for eligibility after addressing the Commission's questions and/or concerns.

The 12 criteria that constitute the Eligibility Requirements are listed below:

***Criterion 1: Responsibility and Authority***

The institution clearly identifies the lines of authority and responsibility for any and all educator preparation programs within the institution and provides assurance that only those persons(s) employed by the program sponsor will recommend individuals to the Commission for a credential or authorization.

***Criterion 2: Lawful Practices***

A program of professional preparation must be proposed and operated by an entity that makes all personnel decisions regarding employment, retention, or promotion of employees without unlawful discrimination. The entity must make all decisions regarding the admission, retention, and graduation of students without unlawful discrimination.

***Criterion 3: Commission Assurances and Compliance***

The institution assures each of the following:

- That there will be compliance with all preconditions required for the initial program(s) the institution would like to propose.
- That all required reports to the Commission including but not limited to data reports and accreditation documents, will be submitted by the Commission-approved entity for all educator preparation programs being offered including extension divisions.
- That it will cooperate in an evaluation of the program by an external team or a monitoring of the program by a Commission staff member.
- That the sponsor will participate fully in the Commission’s accreditation system and adhere to submission timelines.
- That once a candidate is accepted and enrolled in the educator preparation program, the sponsor must offer the approved program, meeting the adopted standards, until the candidate:
  1. Completes the program
  2. Withdraws from the program
  3. Is dropped from the program
  4. Is admitted to another approved program to complete the requirements, with minimal disruption, for the authorization in the event the program closes. In this event, an individual transition plan would need to be developed with each candidate

***Criterion 4: Requests for Data***

The institution must identify a qualified officer responsible for reporting and responding to all requests from the Commission within the specified timeframes for data including, but not limited to:

- program enrollments
- program completers
- examination results
- state and federal reporting

- candidate competence
- organizational effectiveness data
- other data as indicated by the Commission

***Criterion 5: Grievance Process***

The institution has a clearly identified grievance process for handling all candidate grievances in a fair and timely manner. The grievance process is readily accessible for all applicants and candidates and is shared with candidates early in their enrollment in the program.

***Criterion 6: Communication and Information***

The institution must provide a plan for communicating and informing the public about the institution and the educator preparation programs. The plan must demonstrate that:

- The institution will create and maintain a website that includes information about the institution and all approved educator preparation programs. The website must be easily accessible to the public and must not require login information (access codes/password) in order to obtain basic information about the institution’s programs and requirements as listed in (b).
- The institution will make public information about its mission, governance and administration, admission procedures, and information about all Commission-approved educator preparation programs. Information will be made available through various means of communication including but not limited to website, institutional catalog, and admission material.

***Criterion 7: Student Records Management, Access, and Security***

The institution must demonstrate that it will maintain and retain student records. Institutions seeking IIA will provide verification that:

- Candidates will have access to and be provided with transcripts and/or other documents for the purpose of verifying academic units and program completion.
- All candidate records will be maintained at the main institutional site or central location (paper or digital copies).
- Records will be kept securely in locked cabinets or on a secure server located in a room not accessible by the public.

***Criterion 8: Disclosure***

Institutions must disclose information regarding:

- The proposed delivery model (online, in person, hybrid, etc.)
- All locations of the proposed educator preparation programs including satellite campuses.
- Any outside organizations (those individuals not formally employed by the institution seeking IIA) that will be providing any direct educational services, and what those services will be, as all or part of the proposed programs.

***Criterion 9: Veracity in all Claims and Documentation Submitted***

The institution and its personnel demonstrate veracity of all statements and documentation

submitted to the Commission. Evidence of a lack of veracity is cause for denial of IIA.

***Criterion 10: Mission and Vision***

An institution’s mission and vision for educator preparation is consistent with California’s approach to educator preparation.

***Criterion 11: History of Prior Experience and Effectiveness in Educator Preparation***

Institutions seeking IIA must have sponsored an educator preparation program leading to licensure or participated as a partner in any educator preparation programs and/or programs focused on K- 12 public education and provide history related to that experience. Commission staff will research available information about the institution relevant to the application for IIA. Institutions must submit proof of third-party notifications. Enlisting comments should be sent to [Input@ctc.ca.gov](mailto:Input@ctc.ca.gov).

***Criterion 12: Capacity and Resources***

An institution must submit a Capacity and Resources plan providing information about how it will sustain the educator preparation program(s) through a two to four-year period of Provisional Approval (if granted), at a minimum. The institution must submit a plan to teach out candidates if, for some reason, the institution is unable to continue providing educator preparation program(s).

**STAGE III – Preconditions, Common Standards, and Provisional Approval**

Once an institution seeking IIA receives Commission approval for eligibility following Stage II, the institution may continue in the IIA process by submitting the following for Commission approval:

***Preconditions***

Preconditions are requirements necessary to operate an educator preparation program leading to a credential in California. Preconditions are grounded in Education Code, regulations, or Commission policy. An institution seeking Provisional Approval must submit responses to the following preconditions:

- General Precondition #9, if applicable
- Initial Program Preconditions
- Program-Specific Preconditions

An institution’s responses to the preconditions are reviewed by Commission staff. If staff determines that the program has demonstrated compliance with all relevant preconditions, then the preconditions will be found to be met. If the program does not demonstrate compliance 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. The responses must be in compliance with the relevant preconditions before Provisional Approval can be considered by the Commission.

### ***Common Standards***

Common Standards reflect aspects of program quality and effectiveness that are common across all educator preparation programs, regardless of type of program. The institution must respond to each Common Standard by providing information and supporting documentation that is inclusive of all credential programs to be offered by the institution during its provisional phase. An institution's responses to the Common Standards are reviewed by Board of Institutional Review members. The responses must be determined to demonstrate alignment to the Common Standards before the institution can be brought before the Commission for consideration of Provisional Approval.

### ***Provisional Approval***

Once an institution has satisfied Stages I, II, and III of the IIA process, the institution will be brought before the Commission for consideration and determination regarding Provisional Approval and the approval timeframe spanning two to four years, in accordance with the program's design. If the Commission grants Provisional Approval to the institution, the program(s) the institution plans to offer during this period must then be approved by the COA in Stage IV.

At a minimum of two years, this timeframe will be adequate for at least an initial candidate cohort to complete the program thereby allowing for data to be collected to determine the institution's effectiveness in educator preparation. No programs can be proposed in Stage IV beyond those identified during Stage II until the institution is fully approved by the Commission at the conclusion of the IIA process.

### **STAGE IV – Program Standards and Program Approval**

Program standards address aspects of program quality and effectiveness that apply to each type of educator preparation program offered by a program sponsor. Program standards contain statements describing the nature and purpose of each standard and language that details the requirements that all approved programs must meet. Institutions in Stage IV of the IIA process must provide responses to the program standards for the proposed program(s) that the institution intends to offer. The program standards submission is reviewed by a team of qualified reviewers with expertise in the specific program area. Program sponsors must demonstrate alignment to all applicable program standards before the program application may be considered for Initial Program Approval by the COA. If reviewers determine that the program standards submission does not demonstrate alignment to the standards, the submission is returned to the institution with feedback from the reviewers indicating the findings. After changes have been made to the program standards submission, the institution may resubmit the document for additional review. During this process, representatives of the institution can obtain information and assistance from Commission staff. Once reviewers have determined that all program standards are aligned in the submission, the program is recommended to the COA for Initial Program Approval at one of its regularly scheduled



meetings. Action by the COA is communicated to the institution in writing.

It is the Commission’s expectation that the new program(s) operate in a manner that is aligned with Commission standards at all times. Furthermore, it is expected that the institution will respond to all data requests and timelines. During Provisional Approval, and prior to the provisional site visit, an institution must have an initial candidate cohort complete each approved program in order for program effectiveness data to be collected.

### **STAGE V – Provisional Site Visit and Full Approval**

Once an institution has received both institutional approval (Stage III) and initial program approval (Stage IV), the institution can begin admitting candidates and implementing their approved educator preparation program(s) as described during the IIA process for the provisional approval time period. During this time period, the institution will operate the approved program(s), recommend candidates for appropriate credentials, submit annual information to the Accreditation Data System, and obtain access to and use information in the Credential Information Guide (CIG) and Results Analyzer (if appropriate).

While the institution and unit may make modifications to approved programs based on identified needs, those changes should be communicated to and reviewed with IIA staff to ensure continued alignment with standards.

At the end of the provisional approval timeframe granted in Stage III, the institution will host a provisional site visit. Any expenses incurred during a provisional site visit are the responsibility of the institution. During this site visit, a team of Commission-identified reviewers will analyze data collected during the provisional time period, review submissions of and evidence for Program Review, Common Standards Review, and Preconditions, and interview program and institutional stakeholders. The provisional site visit will result in a report of findings, an accreditation recommendation, and the rationale for the recommendation.

This report is presented to the COA which reviews and discusses the accreditation recommendation. The COA can accept or modify the accreditation recommendation and/or any stipulations associated with the findings. Based on the COA’s decision on an institution’s accreditation status and any stipulations, the COA will take action to either put the institution forward to the Commission or retain the institution under its purview to address stipulations. Depending on the accreditation status assigned to an institution by the COA, an institution may or may not be allowed to propose additional new programs while under the purview of the COA. The actions available to the COA in Stage V are illustrated below:

<b>Accreditation Decision</b>	<b>Move to Commission</b>	<b>Follow-up Reports</b>	<b>Permit New Programs?</b>
Accreditation	Yes	N/A	Yes

Accreditation with Stipulations	Determined case-by-case	Yes	Not if retained by COA
Accreditation with Major Stipulations	No	Yes	No
Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations	No	Yes	No
Denial of Accreditation	Yes	N/A	No

All institutions retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations are required to submit follow-up reports providing evidence on the status of appropriate actions being taken to address the stipulations in a timely manner. These reports shall be at least quarterly but may be more frequent, as determined by the COA.

Any institution retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations will be held for a period of not more than one year beginning from the date of the COA's vote on the institution's accreditation status. After one year the institution will appear before the Commission regardless of its accreditation status or the status of any remaining stipulations at that time.

Institutions retained under the purview of the COA to address stipulations that have done so to the satisfaction of COA, will be moved to the Commission at the next soonest meeting, or the next most feasible meeting, following the COA's decision to lift the stipulations.

When an institution is moved before the Commission, the provisional site visit report, any follow-up reports, and the COA's most recent accreditation recommendation are presented to the Commission. The Commission can accept, modify, or reject the COA's recommendation. The Commission's action can be one of four options:

1. Grant Full Approval
2. Grant Full Approval and remand the institution back to the COA to address stipulations
3. Continue Provisional Status for one year to address stipulations
4. Deny approval

Institutional representatives must be present to answer questions during any COA and Commission meetings at which the provisional site visit report or any follow-up reports are presented.

Once an institution is granted Full Approval by the Commission, the institution will take part in all scheduled accreditation activities as part the color cohort to which it is assigned. An official letter will be sent to the institution notifying it of the Commission's action.

### **Next Steps**

If the COA agrees to the above changes to Chapter 3 of the Accreditation Handbook, the handbook will be presented for action at a future meeting.