

Chapter Thirteen

Articulation Between State and National Accreditation

Introduction

Education Code Section 44374(f) specifies that “At the request of an institution, the accreditation of an education unit or a specific program by a national accrediting body shall substitute for state accreditation provided that the national accrediting body has satisfied the applicable conditions set forth in the accreditation framework.” The [Accreditation Framework](#) requires that the Committee on Accreditation (COA) develop and approve a process that ensures that programs seeking national or professional accreditation can do so efficiently and in a manner that takes into account where alignment between the relevant standards exist.

The following elements of the *Accreditation Framework* govern articulation between national and state accreditation:

I. National Accreditation of an Education Unit

National accreditation of an education unit in California is voluntary. Institutions may, at their discretion, seek to undertake national accreditation. One of the objectives of the *Accreditation Framework* was to create a system of professional accreditation that enables institutions to reduce or eliminate redundancy between state and national reviews of the same programs. Institutions have an option whereby state and national accreditation of an education unit can be accomplished simultaneously.

The *Accreditation Framework* sets specific parameters for working with national accrediting bodies. They include the following:

1. The COA will establish an agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding outlining provisions of coordination and collaboration between the Commission and the national accrediting body for the purposes of implementing the accreditation system for an institution that seeks both types of accreditation.
2. A crosswalk identifying areas of alignment between the Commission’s Common Standards and the national accrediting body will be developed and approved by the COA and used as the basis for determining submission requirements for institutions seeking both national accreditation and Commission Accreditation.
3. For any aspect or component of the Common Standards that is found to be absent from the standards of the national accreditor, the institution must demonstrate that it meets the Common Standards.
4. In order for the standards findings of a national accrediting body to be substituted for one or more Common Standards findings for the purposes of an accreditation finding by

the COA, the national accrediting body must find the aspects or components of its own standards to be met according to its own criteria.

5. The accreditation process of the national body must include regularly scheduled reviews of the institution and its programs that include, at minimum, a review of evidence and interviews with appropriate institutional personnel and constituencies.
6. The period of accreditation of the national accrediting body is consistent with the Commission's seven-year cycle and compatible with the accreditation activities established by the state of California.

Implementation of Framework

In keeping with the parameters set forth in the *Accreditation Framework*, the following describes the criteria established to ensure a successful collaborative between the Commission and national accrediting bodies for educator preparation.

Upon the request of an institution, the accreditation of an education unit (school, college, or department of education) by a national accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) for educator preparation may substitute for Commission accreditation in California under the Common Standards provided that the national accrediting entity fulfills the following conditions.

- The national accrediting entity has established a written Memorandum of Understanding outlining provisions of coordination and collaboration between the Commission and the national accrediting body for the purposes of implementing the accreditation system for an institution that seeks both types of accreditation.
- The national accrediting entity understands that the Commission's accreditation system will use the Commission's adopted Preconditions, Common Standards, and relevant Program Standards as the basis for determining comparability.
- The accreditation process of the national entity includes a site visit process.
- The team for any concurrent or joint accreditation site visit has co-leaders, one appointed according to state accreditation procedures and one appointed by the national accrediting body.
- The team members reviewing the Common Standards include members appointed by the national body and one or more California members selected according to state accreditation procedures.
- The review of all program documentation must be completed prior to the site visit, according to the Commission's Program Review guidelines. The preliminary findings on all Commission-approved programs will be available to the accreditation team, and the state team members will substantiate the preliminary findings at the visit.
- Accreditation teams represent racial, ethnic, and gender diversity and include PK-12 school practitioners and postsecondary education members.
- The period of accreditation is consistent with a seven-year cycle and is compatible with the accreditation activities established by the state.

Currently, there are two national accrediting bodies that satisfy the requirements of the *Accreditation Framework*: The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and The Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP). The Commission keeps current and abides by a partnership agreement with both accreditation entities. These partnership agreements are in alignment with the criteria set forth in the *Accreditation Framework*, specify how the entities will collaborate on each aspect of the respective accreditation processes, and identify any logistical requirements such as team composition, reaching standards findings, and completion of the reports.

Institutions interested in seeking CAEP or AAQEP accreditation must follow the procedures for becoming accredited by that entity. In addition, the institution must submit a letter to the Commission's Administrator of Accreditation stating the institution's intent to begin the national accreditation process. Institutions are responsible for gathering any required information about the national accreditation process and understand that the Commission is not the authority on those processes and procedures and does not provide technical assistance on accreditation by CAEP or AAQEP. The Commission makes every effort to align the accreditation cycle with those of the national accrediting body, but in some instances, it may not be possible to do so.

Information about the required components for submission of Common Standards Review and for site visits for institutions seeking accreditation from both a national accrediting body and the Commission will be available on the Commission's website.

II. National Accreditation of Credential Programs

Upon the request of an institution, the accreditation of a specific credential program by a national professional accrediting entity may substitute for state review of the program provided that the COA certifies to the Commission that the national accreditation entity satisfies the following conditions:

1. The accrediting entity agrees to use either:
 - a. The adopted California program standards for the specific credential under Option 1 (See Chapter 2), or
 - b. The standards used by the national entity once they are determined by the COA to be equivalent to those adopted by the Commission under Option 2 (See Chapter 2).
2. The accreditation team represents racial, ethnic, and gender diversity.
3. The accreditation team includes both postsecondary members and PK-12 school practitioners; a minimum of one voting member is from California.
4. The period of accreditation is consistent with a seven-year cycle and is compatible with the accreditation activities established by the state.
5. Nationally accredited credential programs participate in the unit accreditation process. The national accreditation of the program may serve as part of the Commission's Program Review process.

Under this provision of the *Accreditation Framework*, an institution may request accreditation through a national professional entity as long as the conditions identified above are met. Institutions for which an alignment matrix have been prepared and approved by the COA may be found at the Commission's [National Accreditation Alignment](#) webpage.

III. Steps in the Process to 'Substitute' National Professional Accreditation for some part of the California Accreditation Process

Alignment of Standards

The first step in utilizing a national professional organization's accreditation in lieu of California's accreditation procedures is to complete an alignment study of the national professional organization's standards and the adopted California standards. This alignment study and a resulting matrix has already been completed for several entities and these are included on the [National Accreditation Alignment](#) webpage.

If an institution or program sponsor is interested in working with an organization that is not listed on the Commission's National Accreditation web page, the process may be initiated by submitting a request (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/accred-files/Application-N-P-O-S-A.doc>) or by submitting a letter to Accreditation@ctc.ca.gov.

To determine the comparability of national professional organization accreditation standards and processes, the following procedures must be followed:

1. The Commission must receive a request for an analysis of the alignment between a national professional organization's program standards and California's standards. This request can be submitted by an institution in preparation for its accreditation activities or can be from a national professional organization.
2. The alignment analysis can be performed in two ways:
 - a. The institution or national professional organization submitting the request can choose to conduct the analysis of alignment and submit a preliminary alignment matrix for approval by the COA. This process is estimated to take between 3 and 6 months; or
 - b. The institution or national professional organization submitting the request can request that the Commission convene a panel to develop an alignment matrix. When the request is submitted, it will be important for the request to identify upcoming accreditation activities that would utilize this alignment. This will serve to prioritize the requests for alignment to those that will be used for accreditation activities. This option could take up to one year to complete.
3. In accordance with its statutory responsibility to determine comparability of standards, the COA must make a determination of comparability and, if satisfied, approve the matrix. Alternatively, the COA may identify concepts or elements in the California standards that are missing in the national professional standards. The COA may choose to approve an alignment matrix that identifies these additional concepts and requires institutions to address the national professional standards AND the identified elements from the California standards that are not fully addressed in the national standards.

4. Upon approval by the COA, the alignment matrix may be used by the institution when submitting its responses to the standards. The matrix will show where the response used for the national professional organization may be used, and where it will need to be supplemented to ensure that all aspects of the California standards are addressed.
5. Upon approval by the COA, the alignment matrix may be used by other institutions. An institution would notify the Commission of its desire to use national professional standards in its response to the relevant Preconditions. The matrix would need to be updated if there are adopted revisions to either the state standards or the national professional organization's standards.

Alignment of Professional Organization's Accreditation Activities

The second step in utilizing a national professional organization's accreditation process is to conduct a study of the accreditation activities utilized by the professional accrediting organization. Once the study of the accreditation activities has been completed, the COA will determine which, if any, of California's accreditation procedures may be waived or modified based on the organization's accreditation procedures.

Annual Data Submission

Interim reporting required by a national professional organization **may** be utilized for some or all of the annual data reporting requirements, if the COA has determined that the interim reporting required by the national professional organization addresses the critical aspects of California's Annual Data Submission.

Program Review

If the COA has determined that the national professional organization's procedures address the critical aspects of California's Program Review process, the institution may elect to utilize the national professional accreditation in lieu of Program Review. If the alignment matrix adopted by the COA identifies elements of some of the California program standards that are not adequately addressed by the national program standards, the institution must address the identified California program standards during Program Review.

Site Visit

The Commission will be involved in site visits designed to assess the institution or program sponsor's institutional capacity to offer educator preparation programs. These visits focus on the Commission's Common Standards but information from the national professional organization's review could be considered instead of the *Report of Preliminary Findings* from California's Program Review.