



**Frequently Asked Questions  
Implementation of AB 130 (Chapter 44, Statutes 2021)  
Subject Matter Requirement for Candidates  
November 19, 2021**

**Updated on June 30, 2023 to reference new regulations passed in June, 2023.**

**Please see [PSA 23-04](#) for complete information.**

AB 130 (Chapter 44, Statutes of 2021), signed by Governor Newsom in 2021, became effective on July 9, 2021 included new options for teacher candidates to demonstrate subject matter competence. This law, contained in California Education Code Section 44259 (5) (A), outlines the options for demonstrating subject matter competence as follows:

(5) (A) Verification of subject matter competence, demonstrated through one of the following methods:

(i) Completion of a subject matter program approved by the commission on the basis of standards of program quality and effectiveness pursuant to Article 6 (commencing with Section 44310).

(ii) Passage of a subject matter examination pursuant to Article 5 (commencing with Section 44280).

(iii) Successful completion of coursework at one or more regionally accredited institutions of higher education that addresses each of the domains of the subject matter requirements adopted by the commission in the content area of the credential pursuant to Section 44282, as verified by a commission-approved program of professional preparation.

(iv) Successful completion of a baccalaureate or higher degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education with the following, as applicable:

(I) For single subject credentials, a major in one of the subject areas in which the commission credentials candidates.

(II) For multiple subject credentials, a liberal studies major\* or other degree that includes coursework in the content areas pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 44282.

(III) For education specialist credentials, either a major in one of the subject areas in which the commission credentials candidates or a liberal studies\* or other major that includes coursework in the content areas pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 44282.

**\*(Some additional degree major options are now available based on June 2023 regulations- See PSA 23-04)**

(v) Demonstration that the candidate, through a combination of the methods described in clauses (i), (ii), and (iii) in whole or in part, has met or exceeded each of the domains of the subject matter requirements adopted by the commission in the content area of the credential pursuant to Section 44282 for multiple and single subject credentials, or pursuant to Section 44265 for education specialist credentials.

### ***The New Legislation***

#### **Q1. What are the new options?**

A1. The new options are an academic degree major in the credential area being sought, coursework taken at a regionally accredited institution of higher education that addresses the domains of the Subject Matter Requirements, and a combination of the appropriate subject matter examination and coursework that addresses the domains of the Subject Matter Requirements. The two previous options of completion of a Commission approved subject matter program or passage of the appropriate subject matter examination (CSET Exam) remain options for candidates to demonstrate subject matter competence.

#### **Q2. Why were these new options enacted?**

A2. For many years, policy makers, educators and others have suggested that the two statutory options for demonstrating subject matter competency should be expanded to include additional options for candidates to meet this requirement. These new options both recognize the value of content area coursework completed by candidates and provide a viable option for candidates who for a variety of reasons have not been able to successfully complete the subject matter requirement through an examination (CSET) or whose collegiate coursework was not taken within a commission-approved subject matter program. In addition, these options recognize the breadth and depth of study completed by candidates within a relevant major during their undergraduate studies. It is important to note, however, that completing a commission-approved subject matter program as well as completing the subject matter examination (CSET) remain viable options under the law for candidates as a means of meeting the subject matter requirement.

#### **Q3. When did these new options go into effect?**

A3. The law was signed by the Governor on July 9, 2021, and the new options are currently in effect.

**Q4. Will there be regulations that we should pay attention to on this topic?**

A4. New regulations were passed in June, 2023. See PSA 23-04. It is anticipated that there will be regulations needed to fully implement all aspects of this law. An agenda item on this topic will be on the Commission's December 2021 meeting. Personnel at Commission-approved programs should stay alert for any updates on proposed regulations in the PSD E-news, Program Sponsor Alerts, and other communications from the Commission.

***Candidate Eligibility***

**Q5. Which candidates are eligible for these options?**

A5. Any Individual seeking a California credential who need to demonstrate subject matter competence is eligible.

**Q6. Are these options available to only currently enrolled candidates or does it also apply to candidates for whom the subject matter requirement has previously prevented them from moving forward in getting the credential?**

A6. The new subject matter options are available to all candidates whether they are currently enrolled or have not been eligible for the credential in the past because they did not meet the subject matter requirement.

**Q7. Can recent candidates who will need to meet the subject matter requirement during their induction program be able to take advantage of these new options?**

A7. Yes. Candidates who completed their preliminary educator preparation programs in 2020 or 2021 without being able to demonstrate subject matter, including those who received a PS-VTW due to the COVID pandemic, are eligible for these new options. These candidates should consult with their preliminary preparation program.

***Recommending Candidates***

**Q8. Is documentation required when making an online recommendation?**

A8. The online recommendation process will require the commission approved program to indicate by a drop-down list how the candidate demonstrated subject matter competence. Documentation showing how an individual met subject matter competence is not required with an online recommendation. However, Commission approved preparation programs must keep accurate records for each candidate they recommend including how they determined they met the subject matter requirement. Program sponsors should keep such documentation on file locally for their records.

**Q9. Is there a form we have to submit similar to the 41-BSR?**

- A9. There is no similar form as the 41-BSR when verifying subject matter competence. Documentation regarding subject matter should be kept with the program sponsor and does not need to be included with online recommendations.

***General Institutional and Program Eligibility Questions***

**Q10. Which institutions are eligible to offer these new options?**

- A10 All commission-approved educator preparation program sponsors and all types of programs are eligible to implement the new options.

**Q11. Do these new options apply to LEA-based programs?**

- A11. Yes. The law allows all types of educator preparation programs to evaluate a candidate for demonstration of subject matter for all available options. Therefore, commission-approved educator preparation programs at schools, districts, and county offices of education may implement these new options.

**Q12. What if an LEA doesn't feel like it has the expertise to implement all of these options, especially the coursework evaluation option?**

- A12. All educator preparation programs, including LEAs, may employ a variety of ways to implement the new provisions including using their own district and county office content experts, partnering with other commission-approved educator preparation programs, and consulting with district and county content experts outside of the educator preparation programs. It is important to remember that, by recommending the candidate for the credential and indicating that the institution has verified that the applicant has demonstrated subject matter competence, commission-approved preparation programs are ultimately responsible for the decisions that they make.

**Q13. What is the difference between the coursework option and the academic degree major option?**

- A13. The new coursework option allows institutions to apply any coursework towards demonstration of the subject matter requirement if it meets the specific criteria outlined in the law (such as it must be from a regionally accredited institution of higher education) and as long as the program determines that the coursework addresses the content in the applicable subject matter domains. The academic degree major differs in that it allows a specified degree in a content area of the credential being sought to satisfy subject matter competence without the need for the educator preparation program to evaluate the coursework within that degree major.

New regulations were passed in June 2023 that affect this answer. See PSA 23-04

**Q14. Can coursework taken as an undergraduate at a community college prior to transfer to a four- year institution count within these options?**

A14. Yes, coursework taken at any regionally accredited college, including community colleges, may be used to meet the subject matter domain. Coursework does not need to have been transferred to a four-year institution to be counted.

Make sure to reference PSA 23-04.

**Q15. If a candidate has had coursework “verified” by one educator preparation program as meeting demonstration of subject matter but then subsequently decides not to enroll in that program but in another program, does that new program have to agree with the first institution’s assessment?**

A15. In what are hopefully rare occasions, the commission-approved program that enrolls the candidate and that will recommend the candidate for the credential can make a different determination than another institution if it believes that first determination was made in error. It will be important that each institution carefully consider its decisions so that these types of situations do not occur, and candidates are not adversely affected.

**Q16. Do program sponsors need to hire additional faculty for the coursework evaluation process?**

A16. There is no requirement in the law that institutions must hire additional faculty. This is an institutional decision.

**Q17. Does an institution with a commission-approved teacher preparation program need a commission-approved subject matter program to implement the new options?**

A17. No. If a commission-approved programs sponsor also offers a commission-approved subject matter program, the Commission encourages the faculty of the educator preparation program to work closely with subject matter faculty on implementation of these new options. However, the law allows all commission-approved program sponsors to evaluate coursework for these new options.

**Q18. Can adjunct faculty be used for the evaluation process?**

A18. The law does not address the faculty or personnel at an institution who will determine the appropriateness of coursework for meeting the subject matter requirement. This is an institutional decision.

**Q19. Can programs charge a fee to complete the transcript evaluation?**

A19. The law does not address fees. Whether and what an institution charges for its services are not within the Commission’s purview.

**Q20. How does this impact other aspects of the preparation program?**

A20. This law impacts only the way candidates may demonstrate meeting the subject matter requirement. This change does not have any impact on placements during student teaching or other aspects of the preparation program. A candidate’s placement and

selection of the candidate's mentor/master teacher must still be appropriate for the credential being sought and in alignment with the Commission's adopted standards.

### ***Major Option***

#### **Q21. What majors are acceptable to demonstrate subject matter?**

A21.

\*New regulations were passed in June 2023 that affect this answer. See [PSA 23-04](#).

For Multiple Subject, majors that are acceptable are a Liberal Studies major\* or other interdisciplinary degree that includes coursework in the content areas pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 44282. Section 44282 includes the following subjects: language studies, literature, mathematics, science, social studies, history, the arts, physical education, and human development. Also acceptable are Liberal Studies degrees that include any focus or concentration in the title.

For Single Subject candidates\*, if a candidate has a major that matches exactly the subject area on the Single Subject credential, the major option may be used (for example, an English degree may count for meeting the subject matter requirement for a Single Subject English credential). The chart below includes those additional acceptable areas:

- Agriculture
- Art
- Business
- Dance
- English
- World Language (in any of the language for which there is a credential, including English Language Development)
- Health Science
- Home Economics
- Industrial Technology Education
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physical Education
- Science including:
  - Biology
  - Chemistry
  - Geoscience or Earth and Space Science
  - Physics
- Social Science
- Theater

For Education Specialist candidates, any of the degree majors listed above for the Multiple Subject or Single Subject areas is acceptable.

**Q22. What majors are acceptable for Foundational-Level Mathematics?**

A22. Candidates who have a degree from a regionally accredited institution of higher education in Mathematics would be considered to have demonstrated Subject Matter Competence through the major option for either Foundational Level Mathematics or the full Single Subject Mathematics credential. At this time, all other candidates seeking a Foundational Level Math credential would need to go through one of the other options to demonstrate subject matter competence: 1) passage of the CSET Mathematics Subtest I and II, or 2) passage of coursework that is determined to be aligned with the SMRS for Foundational Level Mathematics, or 3) combination of coursework and CSET passage of either Subtest 1 or Subtest II – the combination of which must address all of the SMR domains for Foundational Level Math which includes: a) number and quantity (Subtest 1), 2) algebra (Subtest I), 3) geometry (Subtest 2), and 4) probability and statistics (Subtest 2)

**Q23. What majors are acceptable for Foundational-Level General Science?**

A23. New regulations were passed in June 2023 that affect this answer. See [PSA 23-04](#).

At this time only individuals who have earned a degree in General Science are eligible to demonstrate Subject Matter competence through the major option for the Foundational-Level General Science. All other candidates demonstrate subject matter competence through one of the other options: 1) passage of the CSET Science examination, Subtest I, or 2) passage of coursework that is deemed to be aligned with the SMRs for Foundational Level General Science. The combination of coursework and CSET, while allowable in law, is not necessary for this credential area as if a candidate who passes subtest I of the CSET Science examination (General Science) meets the subject matter requirement without additional coursework. The SMR domains related to Foundational Level General Science are: 1) Scientific Practices, Engineering Design and Applications, and Crosscutting Concepts, 2) Physical Sciences, 3) Life Sciences, and 4) Earth and Space Sciences.

**Q24. What majors are acceptable for the Single Subject Social Science credential since it covers multiple content areas within the social sciences?**

A24. At this time, the only acceptable degree for use with the degree option is a bachelor's degree or higher in Social Science. A degree in History or Economics for example does not meet the law with respect to the Single Subject Social Science for use in demonstrating subject matter competence. In these cases, however, a coursework evaluation is recommended as it may indicate that the candidate has demonstrated subject matter for other social science areas through coursework taken within the academic degree major. The candidate could take one or more CSET subtests or coursework to fill in any gaps in the subject matter requirements for demonstration of subject matter competence in Social Sciences.

**Q25. What majors are acceptable for the Single Subject Credential in Physical Education?**

A25. Many Single Subject credential candidates seeking a Physical Education credential have a Kinesiology degree. Unfortunately, the law does not include this degree major explicitly. If, however, the degree is in Physical Education with a Concentration in Kinesiology or Physical Education: Kinesiology then it would be acceptable. Otherwise, the institution could use the coursework evaluation option to determine if the Kinesiology major included coursework aligned to the Physical Education SMRs.

**Q26. Does the major option also need a coursework evaluation?**

A26. No. If the academic degree, meets the criteria listed above, there is no need for an additional coursework evaluation.

**Q27. What about the option for Multiple Subject that says, “other degree that includes coursework in the content areas pursuant to subdivision (b) of Section 44282.” [language studies, literature, mathematics, science, social studies, history, the arts, physical education, and human development.] Does that also require a coursework evaluation? Does it need to have a specific degree major title?**

A27. In order to use this option, a Commission approved program must ensure that the degree major included courses that cover all of the areas specified.

**Q28. Who does a program contact if it wants to know if a major will be accepted by CTC?**

A28. Programs that need guidance on identification of appropriate degree majors should email the Commission at [Credentials@ctc.ca.gov](mailto:Credentials@ctc.ca.gov).

***Coursework Evaluation to Determine Alignment with the Subject Matter Domains***

**Q29. How does one apply the coursework option?**

A29. A commission-approved program conducts a review of the candidate’s prior coursework taken at a regionally accredited institution of higher education against the Commission’s Subject Matter Requirements (SMRs) for the credential sought by the candidate to determine if they cover the same content.

**Q30. Can this include community college coursework?**

A30. Yes, if the candidate took coursework at a community college, the commission-approved preparation program can accept that coursework if it is aligned to one or more domains of the Subject Matter Requirements (SMRs). Coursework does not need to be transferred to the four-year institution to be used towards meeting the subject matter requirement.

**Q31. Where can programs find the domains for each subject area for evaluating transcripts and coursework for use with the coursework option?**



A31. The Domains of each of the commission-approved Subject Matter Requirements may be found at the following link on the Commission’s webpage: [Domains of Subject Matter Requirements](#)

More general Information about this option may be found at: [Subject Matter Requirement Options](#)

**Q32. What courses do the candidates need to take to qualify for each content area?**

A32. The Commission will not specify an individual listing of course titles, as these vary widely across institutions as does the range of content covered by individual courses. Commission-approved program sponsors are encouraged to use content experts to assist with coursework evaluations.

**Q33. At what level of specificity must the coursework be aligned with the Subject Matter Domains?**

A33. The Subject Matter Requirements contain domains and sub-elements within the domains. For the purposes of determining subject matter competence, domain level only may be used. The document contained on the Commission’s website ([Domains of Subject Matter Requirements](#)) includes the Subject Matter Requirements at the domain level.

**Q34. Is there a minimum grade that the candidate must have earned for the coursework to count to be used for demonstration of subject matter?**

A34. Updated June, 2023 based on new regulations - Acceptable coursework must have been completed with a grade of “C” or higher, “Pass”, “Credit” or another designation deemed by the institution of higher education to be the equivalent to a grade of “C” or higher. See updates in [PSA 23-04](#).

At this time there is no minimum grade indicated in the law. The Commission may seek to include a C- or better as the minimum grade in future proposed regulations package.

**Q35. Is there any requirement that the courses be a particular number of units or that there be a certain number of courses for the content to count?**

A35. At this time, the law does not include a requirement that the course content be a minimum number of units.

**Q36. Can the program use AP coursework from a high school transcript in determining subject matter competence?**

A36. AP coursework used for credit toward a degree may be counted.

**Q37. How far back in time can these courses have been completed in order to count toward satisfying the subject matter requirement?**

A37. The law does not specify a recency requirement for coursework to satisfy subject matter but the coursework evaluation for the coursework option must be conducted using the

domains of the current subject matter requirements. Institutions may choose to apply their own recency requirements.

**Q38. Can the program partner with another institution's content expert or teacher preparation faculty to complete the transcript review?**

A38. The commission-approved preparation program holds responsibility for ensuring that all candidates have demonstrated subject matter competence through one of the available options. There is no prohibition against a commission-approved program working with another commission-approved educator preparation program any aspect of transcript or coursework review; however, the approved program sponsor is the entity accountable for each credential recommendation. Review processes will need to be formalized (such as clearly written procedures, Memorandum of Understanding in cases where institutions are partnering) and available upon request for accreditation purposes.

**Q39. Is there a required time frame for completing a subject matter transcript evaluation once the candidate has provided the documentation for review?**

A39. There is no specific time frame in the law for completing the evaluation of transcripts for the purposes of determining that they address the domains of the subject matter requirements. However, the adopted Preconditions require that candidates must have demonstrated subject matter competence prior to daily whole class instruction and cannot be recommended for the preliminary credential without satisfying the subject matter requirement. In addition, state law requires that interns demonstrate subject matter prior to serving on an intern credential.

**Q40. What if the candidate submits a transcript from a non-regionally accredited institution?**

A40. The law requires that the coursework be taken by a regionally accredited institution of higher education. These accrediting bodies are approved by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Coursework from non-accredited institutions cannot be accepted for demonstration of subject matter competence. Programs must verify that the institution has standing with one of the following regional accrediting bodies:

- Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior Commission (WSCUC)
- Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE)
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

**Q41. How does this new policy impact active and approved subject matter programs?**

A41. Subject matter programs have already demonstrated their alignment to the subject matter requirements and are an excellent way for candidates to meet this requirement and to be prepared in the subject they will be teaching. Under this new law, subject

matter programs will remain an option for candidates. Institutions with an approved subject matter program must continue to align their program to all the applicable subject matter requirements.

**Q42. What if the candidate disagrees with our assessment?**

A42. The Commission is not an appellate body for these disputes. The commission-approved program sponsor has the authority to make the determination.

**Q43. Would programs be required to document their coursework evaluation process?**

A43. Programs will be expected to have a well-articulated, formalized process for implementing these options in the law, including their coursework evaluation process. Commission staff are revisiting the Preconditions related to subject matter and anticipate bringing revised Preconditions to the Commission later this year. The field will be notified as to any changes in accreditation documentation early in 2022.

**Q44. Does the coursework evaluation have to be done by faculty in the School/College of Education or can it be someone within the academic departments related to the subject area?**

A44. The law is silent as to the faculty member or institutional personnel that may do the coursework evaluation. Because an evaluation of the content of the subject matter will be needed, institutions with commission-approved subject matter preparation programs are encouraged to use these program personnel whenever possible. Institutions may also use other subject matter experts outside of the school of education, or any other personnel that the institution deems qualified to make these determinations.

***Combination Coursework/CSET Option***

**Q45. How do programs determine what subtests a candidate must pass to determine if they meet subject matter?**

A45. Candidates may demonstrate subject matter competence with a combination of coursework and passage of CSET subtests. To determine if a candidate meets the subject matter requirement for the credential they seek, the commission-approved program will need to evaluate both their coursework and examinations history to determine what aspects of each meet which part of the Subject Matter Requirements. For example, if a person has taken and passed two of the three required CSET subtests for Agriculture, but not passed subtest II, an institution may look to see what aspects of the subject matter domains are covered by each subtest to see what the candidate has not yet demonstrated through exam. Subtest II includes coverage of Animal Science and Environmental Science/National Resources. The institution could then review the candidate's coursework to see if any of the courses taken by the candidate covers this content as required by the subject matter domains.

The following document lists each CSET subtest and its corresponding subject matter domain: [Subject Matter Domains and CSET Examination by Subtest](#). This document will be useful to determine the initial assessment of a candidate's subject matter status. The program will then need to refer to the [Domains of the Subject Matter Requirements](#) to determine if the coursework taken covers the appropriate domains.

**Q46. What score do candidates need on a subtest of the CSET if they use the combination of coursework and examination option?**

A46. An official score report showing "Pass" must be achieved on the needed CSET subtest in order to count as demonstration of subject matter competence for the particular content area.

**Q47. Is there a recency requirement for the validity of the CSET subtests for use in demonstrating subject matter competency for the combination option?**

A47. Yes, the examination must be used within 10 years from the date of testing towards a California credential to count as a valid score towards demonstration of subject matter competence.

#### ***Out of State or Out of Country Questions***

**Q48. Can the program evaluate courses taken by a candidate at a regionally accredited college or university in another state or country?**

A48. A commission approved program may use the same process for evaluating transcripts for regionally accredited institutions of higher education in another state as it does for California based regionally accredited institutions for the purposes of addressing the domains of the subject matter requirements. Commission-approved preparation programs may also use transcripts provided by out of country candidates that have been translated into equivalent courses and units by one of the commission-approved foreign transcript review agencies.

#### ***Miscellaneous Questions***

**Q49. If a candidate is adding a new credential or content area to an existing credential using the provisions outlined in 5 California Code of Regulations § 80499, can they use these new options?**

A49. Yes, a candidate can use the degree major, coursework evaluation, or a combination of coursework and CSET examinations to meet the subject matter requirement for Title 5 Section 80499 purposes. Candidates will need to include a letter from the program that completed the coursework evaluation with their application packet if they wish to use either option that includes coursework.

**Q50. Can the teacher preparation program still require that a candidate take the CSET?**

A50. If a candidate has not demonstrated subject matter competence through one of the available options, taking the CSET exam is still a viable option for the candidate, but institutions should ensure all available options have been examined.

**Q51. How long will the transcript evaluation take?**

A51. Candidates should direct this question to their educator preparation program where they are seeking enrollment or are enrolled.

**Q52. Does this law apply to the Bilingual Authorization Program?**

A52. This law applies to those seeking the Multiple, Single, and Education Specialist credentials only. It does not apply to the requirements for the Bilingual Authorization.

**Q53. Can candidates submit their transcripts to the Commission for an evaluation?**

A53. Candidates must go through their commission-approved educator preparation programs for the determination of subject matter competence using the coursework evaluation option. The Commission does not review candidate transcripts for this purpose.

**Q54. Can a candidate have a transcript evaluation done at a different institution than the institution where they completed their teacher preparation program?**

A54. The institution that is recommending the candidate for the credential will need to verify that the candidate has met subject matter prior to recommending for the credential. Institutions may set its own requirements about how coursework reviews will be implemented.