



**Massachusetts Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education**

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Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

To: Massachusetts Sponsoring Organizations
From: Educator Effectiveness Team
Date: December 23, 2021
Subject: Update Regarding the Revisions to the Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval

In January and [June 2021](#), we shared information with you regarding updates to the program approval guidelines and the development timeline. We are writing now with updates about the program approval process and what guides our decision-making in this work.

What guides our work. As you may have seen in communications earlier this fall, the Office of Educator Effectiveness finalized a new mission statement in August:

We work to create the conditions that support the preparation, development, and retention of a diverse and effective educator workforce so that all of our students thrive.

We define effective educators as educators who nurture and cultivate academic achievement, cultural and linguistic competence, sociopolitical awareness, and emotional intelligence. In partnership with you, our colleagues in educator preparation, we believe that if we are consistent over time in adhering to this mission, we can work together to contribute to disrupting systemic inequities, in particular for Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and Multiracial students and educators who have been most harmed through existing and historical policies and practices. This mission has guided, and will continue to guide, decision-making regarding the program approval process.

In accordance with this mission, we are working to revise the program approval process to ensure that it is increasingly effective, efficient, and consistent. This memo includes key decisions that have been made since June 2021, work that is still underway, and opportunities for further stakeholder engagement.

Key Decisions

Timeline

- As we communicated in the June 2021 memorandum, **the new formal approval cycle will launch in Fall 2024.**
- **The A-G cohort model for formal reviews will remain the same, with potential for some adjustments.** Exceptions include SOs on informal approval or probationary approval, or SOs on conditional approval not making sufficient progress.
- **We will share the final cohorts and years for review by June 2022.** This will provide organizations with ample time to prepare.

Process

- **External reviewers will continue to play a critical role in the formal review process.** We believe that our colleagues from both educator preparation and the PreK-12 space are crucial to maintaining an effective and consistent program approval process.
- Based on feedback on the current process and our commitment to ensuring that the revised program approval process is more efficient, DESE is exploring a formal review model that will **streamline the offsite submission process, particularly in advance of an onsite visit.** While details related to this shift are still to be determined, we will be studying one potential model this spring, in which two SOs under review will engage in an onsite visit followed by a targeted offsite submission (i.e., a “flipped review”).
- **The emphasis will remain on outputs and impact over inputs and process.** We believe that this continues to place the focus on the right place – what’s happening in schools and classrooms as a result of an effective preparation experience – while giving preparation providers the space and flexibility to design ways to best meet those outcomes.

Content

- Per both prior memoranda, the revisions to the program approval expectations and processes will have two foci:
 - **Building a foundation of anti-racist practice.** In alignment with our mission statement, our work continues to be driven by the question, “How are educator preparation efforts designed to break historical patterns of racial inequity, not by accident but by design?” Updated program approval expectations and processes will support our collective work toward this goal. An example of this focus can be found in the revised [Guidelines for the Preparation of Administrative Leaders](#) that were finalized in September 2021.
 - **Deepening instruction and program level-expectations.** With the updates to program approval, we are committed to a more explicit review of instructional programming with a specific emphasis on the development of curricular literacy, evidence-based practices (e.g., evidence-based early literacy), and administrator preparation.
- **The [Educator Preparation Domains](#) will not change, but the criteria will be revised.** The six Educator Preparation Domains are derived from the [program approval standards](#) which are codified in regulations (603 CMR 7.03(2)). The program approval criteria will continue to be organized through the six domains: the Organization, Partnerships, Continuous Improvement,

the Candidate, Field-Based Experiences, and Instruction; however, the criteria within each domain will be revised to reflect the focus on racial equity and deepening instruction and program level expectations as described above.¹

- **The current timeline for the release of the revised criteria is early 2023.** Stakeholders will have multiple opportunities to engage with the process to revise these criteria. Please see below for more information about future stakeholder engagement.
- **Revisions to the [Professional Standards for Teacher Guidelines \(PSTs\)](#) will be made after the [educator evaluation rubric updates](#) are finalized.** We are taking this approach to the revisions process for the PSTs in order to maintain alignment across all of DESE's documents that reflect expectations regarding educator effectiveness. As a result, implementation of the revised PSTs will not be expected until after the launch of the revised program approval process. Our hope is that this timeline provides organizations with the space to focus on the revisions to the program approval criteria over the next few years.

Decisions Under Consideration

We believe that it is important to remain transparent with you about the revisions to the development of the program approval process. Like many organizations, the pandemic has impacted our decision-making timelines. However, it has also given us an opportunity to balance our sense of urgency in providing you with information to make concrete decisions with our responsibility to take critical and self-reflective pauses to ensure that we are centering racial equity and are in alignment with our mission in every decision that we make. As a result, we want to share that the following elements of the program approval process are still being determined:

- As noted above, we are in the process of developing the specific revised criteria language that will guide the program approval process for each existing Domain. We are committed to centering racial equity and deepening instruction and program level-expectations through these revisions. This work will unfold in close partnership with advisory groups in 2022 and 2023.
- DESE is engaging in a review of the current measures that are considered during the formal review process. As you may be aware, we are examining the extent to which Massachusetts' teacher preparation and licensing systems produce educators who are effective in improving outcomes for students of color. With support from USED's Institute of Education Sciences, this [3-year research study](#) centers the experiences of students of color, defines outcomes beyond standardized test scores, and identifies characteristics of educators who have the greatest impact. Work such as this will also inform our revised program approval process and may impact when we are able to identify measures that could be considered for formal review.
- Other aspects for the formal review process are still under consideration. These include which stakeholders will be convened for focus groups, focus group questions that will need to be

¹ These revisions will mirror the revisions made to the [Guidelines for the Preparation of Administrative Leaders](#). The Professional Standards for Administrative Leadership were not revised, but the indicators were updated to reflect the four priority areas for preparing program completers as described on pgs. 9-10 of the Guidelines and specifically incorporate anti-racist competencies for administrative leaders.

developed to align to the revised program approval criteria, worksheets to communicate additional, targeted information, and other logistical components of formal review visits.

Opportunities for Stakeholder Engagement

We believe that stakeholder engagement is the bedrock of developing a more effective, efficient, consistent, and equity-driven program approval process, and we are committed to the following activities:

- We will engage in a **“listening tour” in Spring 2022** to inform changes to the program approval process and expectations. This listening tour will include opportunities for you and other faculty to share as educator preparation representatives. We also hope to hear from district leadership and hiring principals, supervising practitioners, recent candidates and completers, paraprofessionals, family members, and other stakeholders. We are working to bring on an external vendor to lend additional capacity for this work and will share invitations to these upcoming engagement opportunities as they become available.
- In 2022 and 2023, we will engage with **advisory groups** around developing criteria and deepening instruction and program-level expectations.
- In addition to what is noted above, **we are open to including additional types of engagement that you would like to see made available**. Please complete this brief [form](#) to share your thoughts.

We understand that change can bring feelings of uncertainty and upheaval, especially in the context of the ongoing pandemic. We hope that the above information and timelines, as well as our commitment to ongoing transparency and stakeholder engagement related to these updates, is helpful to you in planning for the revised formal review visits. In addition to the stakeholder engagement opportunities described above, we will be providing technical assistance regarding the changes to the program approval process. The specific content and timelines for this assistance will be provided at a later date.

We deeply believe that by partnering together, we can ensure that we develop an effective, efficient, and consistent process that allows us to center racial equity and deepen program level-expectations that will most benefit students. We have confidence that this revised process will also allow us to elevate the practices your organizations engage in to develop effective, anti-racist educators while also working towards the systemic changes necessary to benefit students and the future educators of Massachusetts.

In partnership,

The Educator Effectiveness Team