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MEMORANDUM

To: Massachusetts Sponsoring Organizations
From: Educator Effectiveness Team
Date: November 18, 2022
Subject: Update Regarding Revisions to the Guidelines for Educator Preparation Program Approval

In [June 2022](#), we shared information with you regarding updates to the *Guidelines for Program Approval* and the development timeline. We also released nine sections of the revised Guidelines for public comment at that time. We are writing now with **Key Updates** to this process, as well as a **summary of the feedback received through Summer 2022 public comment**.

What guides our work: The Office of Educator Effectiveness is driven by our mission statement:

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 those 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 revising the program approval process to ensure that it is increasingly effective, efficient, consistent, and equity-driven. These revisions will elevate two key 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 curriculum literacy, evidence-based practices (e.g., [evidence-based early literacy](#)), and administrator preparation.

Our work to finalize how these foci are reflected in the expectations and processes described in the Guidelines for Program Approval will continue over the next several months. This memo serves as an update on our work and feedback received to date.

Key Updates

Timeline for Revisions to the Guidelines for Program Approval

The Guidelines for Program Approval were scheduled to be updated in phases between June 2022 and July 2023. Based on feedback received during the public comment period and through other channels, we have shifted the timeline to ensure the full Guidelines for Program Approval, including sections already shared in Summer 2022, is released in its entirety early 2023¹. This will allow public commentary to have the full scope of the revisions as context for their feedback.

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 grounding revisions to all sections of the Guidelines in stakeholder feedback. The remaining sections of the Guidelines for Program Approval are being revised in partnership with several advisory groups including the [Principal and Teacher Advisory Cabinet](#), the [Educational Personnel Advisory Council](#), and the Ed Prep Advisory Group. During the public comment period in early 2023, we will also hold a series of roundtable discussions to hear directly from educator preparation providers, students, and family members regarding the proposed revisions.

Summer 2022 Public Comment Feedback on the Guidelines for Program Approval

Timeline and Process

On June 15, 2022, the Office of Educator Effectiveness released nine sections of the revised Guidelines for Program Approval for public comment. The public comment period closed on September 30, 2022. At the conclusion of public comment, DESE received nine responses, representing six Sponsoring Organizations across the Commonwealth.

Summary

While 88 percent (n=82) of respondents agreed the revised Guidelines are clear and 88 percent (n=8) agreed they include policies/expectations/information the respondent supports, only 43 percent (n=7) agreed that these revisions reflect a commitment to the preparation of anti-racist educators. Similarly, 50 percent (n=8) agreed that these revisions will support Educator Preparation Programs' ability to positively impact PK-12 students, in particular, Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, and multi-racial students.

Most of the responses highlighted the challenge associated with providing feedback on sections of the Guidelines without seeing the full scope of the revisions, and many respondents noted that these sections did not reflect significant revisions. The sections due to be released for public comment in early

¹ Two sections were scheduled to be released for public comment this fall, the Context & Purpose and Stakeholders sections. These will now be released in early 2023. The remaining sections of the Guidelines will be released on or ahead of the schedule outlined in the December 2021 and June 2022 memos.

² N sizes vary across survey items because all questions in the public comment survey were optional.

2023, including the program approval criteria and formal review process itself, will more explicitly reflect the two key foci and have more substantial updates.

Frequently Asked Questions

In addition to the overall feedback, some respondents provided suggestions for minor revisions to specific sections within the Guidelines, and many posed questions regarding the revisions. These comments will be used to inform updates that will be reflected in the full Guidelines released in early 2023. Topics with multiple questions or comments are addressed below to promote transparency.

How is DESE defining “evidence-based” as it relates to these Guidelines?

According to the US Department of Education, evidence-based instruction can be defined as “the practices or programs that have evidence to show that they are effective at producing results and improving outcomes when implemented as supported by valid and reliable research” (U.S. Department of Education, Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015). DESE believes that the strongest evidence-based instructional practices have evidence of efficacy across diverse populations of students.

Have the guidelines regarding national accreditation changed?

No substantive changes were made to the Guidelines regarding national accreditation. At the Sponsoring Organization level, national accreditation is not required and Sponsoring Organizations seeking national accreditation will still need to undergo the state review and approval process described in the Guidelines. Individual license areas that have associated national accreditation required as per [603 CMR 7.00](#) will continue to use documentation of that accreditation to meet the expectations for program approval.

Previous versions of the Guidelines included specific data points that would contribute to an organization being designated “low performing” or “at-risk” of being low performing. Are those data points no longer in effect?

Many of the data points referenced in the [2016 version](#) of the Guidelines are considered as evidence within the formal review process and would contribute to an organization’s overall approval determination. In the revised Guidelines, use of the two designations of *low performing* and *at-risk of low performing* will be limited to organizations that receive Probationary Approval, which would reflect candidate efficacy and/or experiences in the program that are not consistently assured to be high quality, significant areas that must be addressed for the SO to be found to meet state standards, and/or preparation that is placing PK-12 students at risk of receiving an ineffective education.

How will contracted vendors be used in the formal review process?

We have heard significant positive feedback from stakeholders regarding the role of external reviewers in the formal review process. DESE plans to maintain external review teams comprised of representatives from both educator preparation programs and PK-12 schools and districts, facilitated by DESE specialists, to conduct formal reviews. While the language in the Guidelines reflects the permissibility of bringing on a contracted vendor within the informal review, formal review, and/or interim review processes, should such a need arise, there are no plans to replace external review teams with a contracted vendor.

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, as well as our commitment to ongoing transparency and stakeholder engagement related to these updates, is helpful to you in planning for the next formal review at your organization. In addition to the various engagement opportunities to inform the revisions, we will be providing technical assistance regarding the revised expectations and processes over the next two years, beginning in April 2023. More specific details about the content and timeline for this support will be shared in the coming months.

We deeply believe that by partnering together, we can ensure that we develop an effective, efficient, consistent, and equity-driven program approval process that will benefit candidates and PK-12 students. We have confidence that these revisions will also allow us to elevate the practices your organizations engage in to develop effective, anti-racist educators, and to collectively work towards the systemic changes necessary to benefit the students, families, educators, and future educators of Massachusetts.

In partnership,
The Office of Educator Effectiveness