

# **Standards, Policies, and Procedures**

for

South Carolina Educator Preparation Units

South Carolina Department of Education  
Division of School Effectiveness



Effective August 8, 2012

Program Admission Requirements Amended January 8, 2014

## Preface

The authority for educator preparation unit accreditation and teacher certification is designated by statute to the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE). The capacity to certify teachers at the state level is predicated on educator preparation unit accreditation and program approval at the state and national levels. Currently, national level unit accreditation is achieved either through the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) or the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC), both entities being recognized by the United States Department of Education (USED). NCATE and TEAC are proceeding with a merger that will result in one unified national accrediting agency known as the Council for Accreditation of Education Professions (CAEP). The policies and procedures outlined in this document will be continuously reviewed in light of evolving educator preparation accreditation policy and practice. Currently national level program recognition is achieved through the Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs) designated by NCATE. Accountability between the state and national levels is informed by Title II of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008. Annual reports from each unit are compiled into a state report that is submitted to the United States Department of Education (USED). Although national unit accreditation and program recognition are highly desirable at the state level, the ultimate responsibility for unit accreditation and program recognition lies with the SCDE.

The SCDE relies heavily on the outcomes of national unit accreditation and national program recognition to affirm unit accreditation and program recognition. To achieve the necessary balance of state and national accountability, the State Board of Education (SBE) has adopted standards, policies, and practices unique to the state as well as the standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Standards unique to the state are based on state law, state regulations, and State Board–approved policies and guidelines. State standards are intended to ensure that educator preparation programs provide candidates with the preparation they need to meet these requirements. Currently all state-accredited educator preparation units must meet NCATE standards. All programs related to PK–12 educator preparation must either meet program-level standards recognized by NCATE, the standards of another nationally recognized accrediting agency, or the program-level standards established by the SBE.

The decision-making process for educator preparation policy and practice usually begins with a review by NCATE, an NCATE-recognized SPA, or a state review committee. The recommendation of the initial review is taken to the Professional Review Committee (PRC). The recommendation of the PRC is then taken to the Education Professions (EP) Committee of the State Board of Education (SBE). The recommendation of the EP Committee then goes to the full Board for confirmation. The SBE has the final authority to determine policy affecting educator preparation, the accreditation status of educator preparation units, and the recognition status of individual educator preparation programs.

## **I. State Standards**

### **A. National Standards Adopted as State Standards**

#### NCATE Standards

Educator preparation units must meet the standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). Units in public institutions must seek and receive NCATE accreditation. Units in private institutions are encouraged to seek NCATE accreditation, but they are required to meet NCATE Standards if graduates of the unit are to be recognized by the SBE. The unit completes a detailed institutional report and provides evidence for achievement of NCATE Standards One through Six. This information is summarized in a Board of Examiners (BOE) Report that is submitted to the Unit Accreditation Board (UAB) of NCATE. The results of the UAB review are submitted first to the PRC and subsequently to the SBE. The SBE relies heavily on the recommendation of the UAB in making a decision regarding state accreditation (24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-90 (2006)).

The SBE has the final authority to determine the accreditation status of educator preparation units within public and private institutions of higher education in South Carolina.

### **B. Standards Related to State Laws and Regulations**

#### 1. ADEPT

Educator preparation units offering initial licensure programs must develop and implement a plan that integrates ADEPT performance standards throughout candidates' coursework, field experiences, and clinical practice. Advanced programs for the preparation of school guidance counselors, library media specialists, and speech-language therapists must similarly develop and implement a plan that integrates ADEPT performance standards throughout candidates' coursework, field experiences, and clinical practice. The unit must provide evidence that all candidates recommended for certification meet their respective ADEPT competencies.

#### 2. PADEPP

Educator preparation units offering programs for administrators must integrate the state standards for principal performance as defined in the Program for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Principal Performance (PADEPP). All education administration candidates must demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the standards and the performance criteria and the translation of these into everyday practice. Candidates must also demonstrate the ability to design a personal professional development plan on the basis of the state performance standards and the school strategic plan.

### 3. EEDA

Educator preparation units must provide assessment evidence to indicate that all candidates enrolled in educator preparation, school guidance counseling, and education administration programs possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to integrate the following into the PK–12 curriculum: career guidance; cluster study; curriculum frameworks; individual graduation plans; the instruction of students with diverse learning styles; the elements of the Career Guidance Model; contextual teaching; cooperative teaching; and character education. Institutions must also prepare and assess all candidates in the use of applied methodologies in PK–12 academic courses.

### 4. Standards of Conduct

Educator preparation units must provide candidates with specific written information regarding the state Standards of Conduct (SC Code Ann. §§ 59-25-160, 59-25-530, 63-17-1060) required of South Carolina educators for initial certification.

### 5. Safe Schools Climate Act

Educator preparation units must provide evidence that candidates in all certification programs possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to identify and prevent bullying, harassment, and intimidation in schools.

### 6. PK–12 Academic Standards

Educator preparation units must provide evidence that candidates in all certification programs know, understand, and can apply South Carolina PK–12 Academic Curriculum Standards in the area in which they seek to be certified.

## **C. Standards Related to Board of Education Policies**

### 1. Admission Requirements - State Board Approved January 8, 2014

Educator preparation programs must ensure that candidates meet minimum admission requirements at the initial and advanced levels. At the initial undergraduate level, candidates must present

- acceptable scores on Praxis Core exams\*;
- 45 hours of college-level work;
- a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.6 for new students who enter the institution where the unit is housed in the fall of 2014 and the spring of 2015. Students admitted to the institution beginning in the fall of 2015 and thereafter must present a cumulative GPA of 2.75 or higher to be admitted to candidacy;
- and a statement of disclosure concerning all prior convictions to include felonies and misdemeanors.

The unit head may admit a candidate with a cumulative GPA as low as 2.5 if compelling evidence exists and not to exceed 5% of all candidates admitted at that institution.

\*Praxis Core was approved by the State Board in June 2013 and became effective September 1, 2013. Candidates had until August 2014 to complete all three components of the Praxis I series.

All initial and advanced educator preparation programs at the graduate level must present evidence that they have admission requirements similar to other graduate programs at the same institution. Candidates for admission must present evidence of

- academic proficiency as defined by the graduate school of the institution; and
- a statement of disclosure concerning all prior convictions to include felonies and misdemeanors.

## 2. Field and Clinical Experience Requirements

Educator preparation programs and other school personnel preparation programs must provide field experiences (also known as the practicum) that provide candidates with a variety of progressive experiences in multiple and diverse settings. All candidates must complete a minimum of 100 hours of field experiences prior to clinical practice (student teaching) at the initial undergraduate level. At the initial graduate level, all candidates must complete a minimum of 75 hours of field experiences prior to clinical practice. Given the importance of these experiences in educator preparation, the state has specific requirements that must be met.

All educator preparation programs, including programs for the preparation of other school personnel, must provide candidates with a variety of progressive experiences in multiple and diverse settings. Units must present evidence that

- Teacher education candidates at the initial undergraduate level complete a minimum of 100 hours of field experiences in multiple and diverse settings prior to their clinical experience (student teaching).
- Teacher education candidates at the initial graduate level must complete a minimum of 75 hours of field experiences prior to their clinical experience.
- Teacher education candidates have an intensive, continuous clinical experience in a public school in the state of South Carolina. Occasionally extraordinary circumstances arise when the candidate has completed all work but the clinical phase of training and the candidate wishes to request a variance to complete the clinical in a public school in another state. If the unit in South Carolina that will ultimately recommend the candidate for certification agrees to supervise the candidate and fulfill all state requirements of this section, the unit may appeal to the Education Professions Committee (EPC) of the State Board of Education, describing in detail how the unit will ensure that the candidate meets all South Carolina criteria for completion of the clinical, including especially clinical supervision of the candidate by unit faculty. The unit will submit its proposal to the South Carolina Department of Education Division of School Effectiveness. After a staff review of the unit proposal, the proposal will be placed on the EPC agenda. If the EPC approves the proposal, it will be taken to the State Board for final review.
- The clinical experience must be the equivalent of a minimum of twelve weeks or sixty full days.

- The candidate must teach independently a minimum of ten full days in one setting.
- During the clinical phase, the candidate adheres to the daily schedule of the cooperating teacher including activities such as bus duty, faculty meetings and parent conferences.
- Each candidate is supervised by one or more institutional clinical faculty who has preparation in both the supervision of education and in the teaching area of the candidate and is ADEPT-trained.
- Each candidate must be supervised by one or more school-based clinical faculty (the cooperating teacher) who is trained in the ADEPT system.
- Each candidate must receive formative ADEPT evaluations and assistance from both their institutional clinical faculty and their school-based clinical faculty. These formative evaluations will provide the candidate with written and oral feedback in terms of all ADEPT standards and must be based on a minimum of four classroom observations (at least two by the institutional clinical faculty and two by the cooperating teacher). Formative ADEPT evaluations, based on appropriate ADEPT standards, are also required for candidates preparing to work as other school personnel.

Each candidate must receive at least one summative ADEPT evaluation prepared by both the institutional clinical faculty and the cooperating teacher. The summative evaluation must be aligned with all ADEPT formal evaluation guidelines; must include all evaluation procedures, including at least one summative evaluation by the faculty supervisor and one summative evaluation by the cooperating teacher; and must ensure that the candidate receives both oral and written feedback on all ADEPT standards. Summative evaluations based on appropriate ADEPT standards are also required for candidates preparing to work as other school personnel.

- Each candidate's background must be screened and approved through a SLED check prior to participation in any field experience.
- Each candidate's background must be reviewed and cleared by SLED and the Federal Bureau of Investigation prior to clinical practice.
- Each candidate must be advised that prior arrests or convictions could affect ability to complete the clinical experience and qualify for certification in South Carolina.

### 3. Eligibility for Initial Certification

Educator preparation units are responsible for recommending program completers for South Carolina certification. The recommendation from the unit indicates that the candidate has successfully completed all requirements of an approved program. Secondary candidates must complete a major of at least 30 semester hours in the area for which they are seeking certification. Middle-level candidates at the undergraduate level must complete two areas of concentration with at least 15 semester hours in each area. Middle-level certification is content specific, and completers of approved undergraduate middle-level programs are certified in two content areas. Candidates must be advised by the unit that a prior criminal record could prevent certification.

### 4. Annual Reports

Educator preparation units are required to submit annual reports to the SCDE. To prevent unnecessary duplication, the state will accept copies of annual reports submitted to national organizations for state purposes. However units should be aware of any state requirements that extend beyond the scope of a national report and take care to include information unique to the state in their annual reports. The SCDE requires two annual reports, both of which are due on April 30 of each year:

- the annual AACTE/NCATE combined report (Forms A, B, and C), and
- the annual Title II report.

### 5. Professional Development Courses

Educator preparation units offering professional development courses must align those courses and related activities, to the extent appropriate to the intent of the course, with the National Staff Development Council's Learning Forward standards for staff development in terms of context, process, and content. For professional development courses at the graduate level, the unit develops and presents courses that respond, as closely as practical to the intent of the course, with ten SACS criteria: knowledge base, dynamic interaction, research base, faculty qualifications, faculty contributions to the discipline, duration of activity, collective participation, content focus, active learning, and coherence.

#### 6. Advanced Programs for the Preparation of Teachers

All educator preparation units must align all graduate degree programs not reviewed by a SPA with the five core propositions of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). Evidence of candidate performance in these areas, based on NBPTS Standards, must be reported in the Institutional Report under NCATE Standard One.

#### 7. ISTE Standards for Technology in Education

Educator preparation units must align their degree programs as well as their courses with the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS-T) developed by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) as a strategy for significantly enhancing the capacity of preservice as well as in-service teachers to incorporate technology into their teaching and their students' learning.

#### 8. Experimental or Innovative Programs

Educator preparation units must seek advance approval to employ varied and innovative educator preparation techniques while being held accountable for producing skilled and knowledgeable teachers and other school personnel. Units seeking approval of innovative or experimental programs leading to certification must file written notification with the SCDE's Office of Certification, Recruitment, and Preparation (OCRCP) indicating the specific area of certification or experimentation for which approval is sought.

With a recommendation from the SCDE and the PRC, the SBE may approve an experimental or innovative program for a maximum of three years. An on-site evaluation team may be appointed by the OCRCP to review the programs and report its findings to the PRC for recommendations to the SBE. After experimental and innovative programs have been successful in meeting their stated goals for three years, they may be continued as an approved component of the educator preparation program and will be reviewed as part of the state's annual reporting and program review process and the on-site visit.

### **D. Integration of State Standards Within an NCATE Unit Review**

Evidence regarding State Standard A, which encompasses all NCATE Standards, will be contained in the unit Institutional Report (IR) and Exhibits which are prepared every seven years as the unit seeks reaffirmation of accreditation. Evidence for State Standards B. 1-6 must be included in the unit's Electronic Evidence Room and included in the overall consideration of unit success on NCATE Standard 1. Lack of compliance with State Standards B. 1-6 may result in one or more Areas for Improvement (AFIs) under Standard One of the national accreditation report.

Immediately before and during an accreditation visit, the staff of Certification, Recruitment, and Preparation (OCRCP) will review unit assurances and other data that

document compliance with State Standards C. 1-8. Failure to comply with State Standards C. 1-8 may be brought to the SBE, after review by the PRC, as a state area for improvement (SAFI). Although SAFIs will not affect the national accreditation status of a unit, they may affect subsequent state accreditation status. For example, if there were issues with the alignment of advanced non-certification programs with NBPTS, the SBE might declare the unit “approved with conditions” until the matter was resolved.

The SBE has the final authority to determine the accreditation status of educator preparation units within public and private institutions of higher education in South Carolina.

## **II. Continuing Unit Accreditation and First Time Unit Development and Accreditation**

Every seven years, the accreditation status of previously accredited units must be reviewed and reaffirmed. The process involves the unit's submitting program reports for each area in which it offers a certification program as well as submitting an institutional report at the unit level. All accredited units must respond to performance-based standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) as well as to the standards of the state of South Carolina described in this document.

### **A. Continuing Unit Accreditation**

All public educator preparation units must be accredited by NCATE; private units are strongly encouraged to seek NCATE accreditation. The SBE has the final authority to determine the accreditation status of educator preparation units within public and private institutions of higher education in South Carolina.

The unit review process for all public and private institutions of higher education in South Carolina is carried out by a team composed of representatives from NCATE and the state of South Carolina. All NCATE- and state-appointed team members are pre-K–12 and university educators and other qualified educators who have received training in using the NCATE standards and the state standards to evaluate education units. The SCDE will provide state consultants to assist in all aspects of the team visit.

#### **1. State-Only Accreditation**

Though encouraged to seek national accreditation through NCATE, units in private institutions of higher education have the option of achieving state accreditation through the SBE by meeting NCATE standards. State-accredited institutions complete the same review process as NCATE-accredited institutions; however, all review team members are state-appointed. The state team's report and any subsequent rejoinders are submitted to the PRC, which makes a recommendation to the SBE.

#### **2. Financial Considerations**

The expenses of state team members and state consultants participating in an on-site accreditation review are subsidized by the SCDE. The subsidy is determined by SCDE policies at the time of the visit.

### **B. First Time Unit Development and Accreditation**

Educator preparation units not currently accredited by the SCDE are required to meet all NCATE and state preconditions prior to applying for accreditation.

Public institutions seeking to establish a new educator preparation unit should begin consulting with representatives of the Commission on Higher Education and the Office of Certification, Recruitment and Preparation (OCRP) at least two years prior to anticipated recognition of candidacy for state accreditation. Private institutions seeking

to establish a new educator preparation unit should begin consulting with the OCRP at least two years in advance of anticipated approval. General procedures for New Unit Development include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Present evidence of compliance with all NCATE preconditions to OCRP.
- Submit program proposals for all new programs within the proposed unit to OCRP.
- Once NCATE pre-conditions and specific program proposals have been approved, the emerging unit will develop an institutional report following current NCATE guidance for the development of a new unit IR.
- After a summary staff review of unit pre-conditions, new program proposal, and the IR, a state team will conduct a formal institutional visit to review institution and unit readiness to implement new program(s) within the new unit.
- If the visit results in a favorable review of readiness to implement NCATE and state standards within the unit, the full proposal will be taken to the PRC.
- The PRC will take a recommendation to the SBE via the EPC.
- If the unit is recognized as a candidate for state accreditation by the SBE, the unit may implement approved program(s) and begin to gather evidence of effectiveness. At this point, the institution will have up to five years to earn state accreditation. During this interim, the unit will submit yearly progress reports to the SCDE. When a program has the first ten completers, a program report must be submitted to the SCDE. Upon the collection of sufficient unit and program evidence, but no later than five years after candidate status has been achieved, state accreditation may be earned by hosting a state team visit that follows a traditional NCATE review process.

Once an institution notifies OCRP that they seek to establish a new unit, the OCRP will issue a procedures memorandum outlining the exact process the unit should follow. This memorandum will account for national and state policies and procedures in effect at the time of the new unit creation.

### **III. Program Development, Approval, Recognition, Modification, Voluntary Termination, and State Termination**

In South Carolina units are authorized to recommend graduates for specific initial and advanced certifications. After verifying receipt of the degree and appropriate Praxis test scores, the Office of Certification acts on the certification recommendation of the unit. The state must therefore rely on the units to uphold the integrity of the certification process. Since certification is dependent on the presence of an approved program which has been state and, in most cases, nationally recognized, program integrity is at the heart of unit integrity. As circumstances are constantly changing in the educational environment, units are encouraged to periodically review the effectiveness of the programs they offer, the continuing need for those programs, and the need for new programs not currently offered. Circumstances may necessitate the strategic modification or voluntary termination of a program. The following policies are intended to assist units in managing their programs in an effective manner.

#### **A. New Program Development**

The development of new programs is encouraged. Units should be aware that the new program development process depends partially on the public or private nature of the institution. Units seeking to establish a new program in a public institution should begin the process through the new program proposal process of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE). Units in private institutions should begin the process with the Office of Certification, Recruitment, and Preparation in the Division of School Effectiveness. Units are encouraged to consult with representatives of the CHE and OCRP as appropriate as soon as a new program is contemplated. Units are advised that the review of new program proposals, both public and private, often requires several iterations before final approval is secured. While it is realistic to consider that a complete proposal, submitted at the beginning of the fall semester, might be approved for implementation the following fall, it is not realistic to consider that a complete proposal, submitted at the beginning of the spring semester, would be ready for implementation the next fall.

#### **B. Approved Programs**

##### **1. Recently Approved Programs**

Educator preparation units are required to submit program reports to the appropriate SPA (if the unit is NCATE-accredited) or to the SCDE the semester immediately following the graduation of their first ten completers in a recently approved program or at the time of the cyclical review, whichever comes first. Reports reviewed by state-review teams must be based on the SBE standards and must use the same forms and procedures as those required by the SPAs. Teams at on-site visits use the results of the program reviews as evidence of the quality of the individual programs offered by the unit (NCATE Standard 1).

## 2. Continuing Programs

The accreditation process requires the submission of program reports for all educator preparation programs for which the SBE has approved standards. These reports must be submitted in accordance with the NCATE Timelines by Semester of Visit. Reports reviewed by state review teams must be based on the SBE standards and must use the same forms and procedures as those required by the SPAs. Programs should consult with OCRP personnel prior to initiating a program report to ensure that appropriate standards are being assessed. Teams at on-site visits use the results of the program reviews as evidence of the quality of the individual programs offered by the unit (NCATE Standard 1).

### **C. Modification of an Existing Program**

Since programs are under continuous review, it will not be unusual for an existing program to seek a modification based on changes in the profession as well as on data about candidate performance. Programs in the public domain should consult initially with the staff of the South Carolina CHE to determine if the modification should be managed by letter of notification or through a more formal program modification process. Once a modification is reviewed and approved by the CHE, the OCRP will use that same documentation to review the status of the modified program. Programs in the private domain should consult with personnel in the OCRP to determine the amount of documentation required to recognize the modification. In most cases, the change will be taken to the PRC and the SBE for information only. If the program modification involves a substantive change in mission, outcomes, or courses that may affect the certification status of completers, a peer review will be conducted, the results of which will be submitted to the PRC for a recommendation to the SBE.

### **D. Voluntary Program Terminations**

Public institutions must notify the CHE in writing that a program is being voluntarily terminated. Private institutions must notify the OCRP in writing that a program is being withdrawn. Such notifications are shared with the PRC and the SBE as information. The notification from the institution should include the date when a program will officially cease to exist and thus when the SCDE should no longer consider the unit's subsequent graduates for certification. After the effective date of program closure, the educator preparation unit may not recommend candidates from that program for certification. Institutions will be ineligible to submit a request for the reestablishment of a withdrawn program for a period of one year after the date of the original termination.

### **E. State Termination of a Program's Certification Recommendation Authority**

Educator preparation programs that result in initial or advanced certification must be nationally recognized by an NCATE-approved SPA or state-recognized through a review coordinated by the SCDE's OCRP. The state participates in NCATE's policy of recognizing certain other national specialized and professional associations. Certification programs not subject to an NCATE-approved SPA or state recognition

must meet the standards of these other national specialized and professional associations if they are permitted to recommend candidates for certification.

Programs must seek national or state approval once ten candidates have completed the program or when program reports are due for an upcoming unit accreditation visit. The failure of any program to obtain national or state recognition through the revised program report process within the given time period will result in a review of that program by the PRC. The PRC, at that time, may choose to continue the program on probation for a defined period of time while recognition is sought or to terminate the certification authority of the program. The recommendation of the PRC will be taken to the EPC and subsequently to the SBE for final action. During a period of probation, no new candidates may be admitted to the program, and existing candidates must be informed of the probationary status of the program. If certification authority is terminated by the SBE, no new candidates can be admitted, and the existing candidates have two years to complete the program. If existing candidates do not complete the program within two years, they must transfer to another program or they will be denied certification by the SCDE's OCRP. When any educator preparation program is terminated, the institution must notify all current and potential internal candidates of the status of its program.

Any existing program with substantial changes that were made in the middle of the review cycle and that constitute a substantial shift in the purpose and outcome of the program or the certificate area will be subject to an off-cycle program review. Failure by an institution to request a program review will result in its candidates being ineligible for certification.

The state will not take a program that is not nationally recognized or state-recognized into a first state unit or first NCATE unit review.

#### **IV. State Board of Education Actions**

Since Regulation 43-90 requires all educator preparation units and all programs within the scope of educator preparation units to meet national unit and program standards, there is an integral relationship between professional review and ultimate state authority. The state relies on professional peer review of units and programs but retains the final authority to make decisions about unit and program viability. Most decisions about unit accreditation come from the UAB of NCATE. Most program recognition decisions come from the respective Specialized Professional Association (SPA). In cases of state review only, the PRC functions in a manner similar to that of the UAB and SPA. Once that level of professional consultation is achieved, the OCREP manages the state-level review process, which begins with the PRC and goes subsequently to the (EP) sub-committee of the SBE before a final decision is made by the SBE.

##### **A. Professional Review Committee (PRC)**

The PRC is responsible for reviewing and recommending policies regarding educator preparation, the accreditation status of educator preparation units, and the conditional approval of new certification programs to the SBE. A new program is “approved with the condition that the program gain national or state recognition” within the time specified. The PRC also hears appeals from units regarding relief from standing standards and policies.

The PRC consists of fourteen members appointed by the SBE. Some members serve as resource experts based on their positions; however all members of the PRC are approved by the SBE. PRC members elect a chair and a vice chair every year. All members serve staggered terms of three years. The following individuals are included among the members of the PRC:

- one representative of the EP Committee of the SBE;
- one representative from the Division of School Effectiveness;
- one representative from the Division of Accountability;
- one district-level school administrator;
- one building-level school administrator;
- one classroom teacher;
- one National Board Certified teacher;
- three representatives of state-supported institutions of higher education;
- three representatives of private institutions of higher education; and
- one representative of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education.

To avoid conflicts of interest, PRC members do not participate on accreditation review teams during the time of their service on the PRC and do not participate in the deliberations or vote on the Committee’s recommendation for institutions where they are currently employed or from which they have recently graduated. PRC members do not vote on matters that they have reviewed at an earlier point in the process. PRC members do not serve as in-state accreditation consultants during their service on the

Committee. The SBE may replace any PRC member who misses two consecutive meetings.

## **B. Unit Accreditation and Title II Status Decisions**

### 1. Accreditation Decisions for Continuing Units

The SBE will render a state accreditation decision based on a number of factors. The most significant of those factors will be the recommendation of the UAB of NCATE as well as the results of the state team review of state standards. Potential decisions include the following:

- **Accreditation for seven years.** All standards are met and no serious problems exist across standards.
- **Accreditation for two years with a focused visit.** When at least one standard is not met and problems are centered in the unmet standard, a focused visit in two years will be required. If the standard continues to be unmet after the focused visit, accreditation will be revoked.
- **Accreditation for two years with a full visit.** When one or more standards are not met and serious problems exist across standards, a full visit will be requested. If the standard(s) continues to be unmet after the full visit, accreditation will be revoked.
- **Deny accreditation.** Accreditation will be denied when one or more standards are not met and the preponderance of evidence indicates problems across multiple standards by an institution seeking accreditation for the first time.
- **Revoke accreditation.** Accreditation will be revoked when one or more standards are not met and the preponderance of evidence indicates problems across multiple standards by an institution seeking to continue accreditation.

### 2. Accreditation Decisions Following First Visits

The SBE will render a state accreditation decision based on a number of factors. The most significant of those factors will be the recommendation of the UAB of NCATE as well as the results of the state team review of state standards. Potential decisions include the following:

- **Accreditation for seven years.** All standards are met and no serious problems exist across standards.
- **Accreditation for two years with a focused visit.** When at least one standard is not met and problems are centered in the unmet standard, a focused visit in two years will be required. If the standard continues to be unmet after the focused visit, accreditation will be revoked.

- **Accreditation for two years with a full visit.** When one or more standards are not met and serious problems exist across standards, a full visit will be requested. If the standard(s) continues to be unmet after the full visit, accreditation will be revoked.
- **Deny accreditation.** Accreditation will be denied when one or more standards are not met and the preponderance of evidence indicates problems across multiple standards by an institution seeking accreditation for the first time.
- **Revoke accreditation.** Accreditation will be revoked when one or more standards are not met and the preponderance of evidence indicates problems across multiple standards by an institution seeking to continue accreditation.

### 3. Appeal of Unit Accreditation Decisions

#### a. Appeal of an NCATE/UAB Decision

Any institution, state, or association that is the object of an adverse decision, as made by one of NCATE's governance boards, may appeal that decision prior to the action becoming final. An adverse decision shall be provided to the institution in writing and must describe the basis for the action and inform the institution of its right to appeal. An adverse decision as defined by NCATE's boards includes the denial of an application for, or the revocation of, a state partnership; the denial or revocation of constituent membership; the denial of application for, or the revocation of, program standards; and the denial or revocation of institutional accreditation.

An appeal is heard by a Review Panel, consisting of five members selected from the Appeals Board. Appeals Board members are trained regarding the NCATE standards, policies, and procedures involved in conducting on-site evaluations, applying or establishing its policies, and making accreditation decisions. Appeals Board members are also trained on the process and procedures for hearing an appeal, including the decisions that must be made by a Review Panel. A Review Panel does not include members of the NCATE Board that took the initial adverse action that is being appealed. Members of the Panel are subject to the NCATE Code of Conduct, which acts to prevent both real and apparent conflicts of interest.

The Review Panel will affirm, amend, reverse, or remand the adverse action. The Review Panel's decision shall be implemented by the governance board whose decision was the subject of the appeal. If the Review Panel remands the decision to a board, the Panel must identify the specific issues that the board must address, and subsequent action by the board must be consistent with the Review Panel's decision or instructions.

The decision of the Review Panel shall be sent to the appellant in a written report that conveys the basis of the action taken by the Panel. The decision of the Review Panel will be received by the Executive Board as an information item at

its first meeting following the hearing. The status of the appellant remains unchanged until the appeals process has been exhausted.

b. Appeal of an Adverse Accreditation Decision

An adverse accreditation decision is one that denies or revokes the accreditation of a professional education unit at the initial teacher preparation level and/or the advanced preparation level. The adverse decision may be appealed only on the grounds that:

- 1) NCATE standards were disregarded,
- 2) stated procedures were not followed,
- 3) (for institutions) evidence favorable to the institution and provided to the Board of Examiners (BOE) was not considered, or
- 4) (for institutions) evidence favorable to the institution and provided to the UAB was not considered.

If an institution believes that one or more of these four conditions was a factor in the denial or revocation of accreditation, the only available means of redress is through the appeals process.

Although an institution may appeal an adverse decision in which there was a lack of a full number of team members due to last-minute emergencies, that factor alone is not sufficient to uphold an appeal. The institution must convincingly demonstrate that this fact made a difference in the accreditation decision. The institution would have to show that (1) the lack of a full number of members caused actual prejudice to it; and (2) the prejudice changed the accreditation decision. The fact that the institution did not recommend canceling the visit would be evidence that it, at least before the visit, believed that the assembled team would be sufficient to conduct a fair and complete visit.

In the case of accreditation decisions, the Review Panel may affirm, amend, reverse, or remand the decision to the UAB. If the Panel remands the decision to the UAB, it must identify specific issues that the board must address. The UAB must act in a manner consistent with the Review Panel's decisions or instructions. The status of the appellant at the time of the visit remains unchanged until the appeals process has been exhausted.

c. Process of Appeal

In the case of an accreditation decision review, all evidence presented in the appellant's brief and considered by the Review Panel must be confined to conditions existing at the time of the BOE team visit. If, however, the institution's financial information was a significant and material factor in the UAB's decision to take the adverse action, the Review Panel shall permit the institution to present evidence of new financial information if all three of the following conditions are met:

- 1) The financial information was unavailable to the institution until after the decision subject to appeal was made.
- 2) The financial information is significant and bears materially on the financial deficiencies identified by the board in the underlying decision.
- 3) The only remaining deficiency cited by the board in support of its final adverse action decision is the institution's failure to meet NCATE standards pertaining to finances.

An institution or program may seek review of new financial information provided by this process only once, and any determination made by the Review Panel with respect to that review does not provide a basis for appeal.

The following provisions govern the appellate process:

- 1) Within 15 days after receiving notice of an adverse action, an institution, state, or association electing to appeal that decision must present written notification of its appeal to NCATE's president.
- 2) No later than 30 days after the date that it submits its notification, the appellant must submit a brief to NCATE's president that sets forth the specifics of its appeal and includes full documentation.
- 3) NCATE's president appoints a Review Panel, drawn from the Appeals Board, to hear the appeal. NCATE's president will also designate one of the appointees as chair of the Review Panel.
- 4) No later than 30 days after submission of the appellant's brief, the Review Panel is convened to hear and act on the appeal. The Review Panel shall have access to prior NCATE Review Panel decisions so that the Panel's actions are consistent with NCATE policies, requirements, and prior treatment of institutions.
- 5) The appellant shall have the right to appear before the Review Panel to present a 30-minute oral argument on its brief. The appellant shall also have the right to representation by counsel during the appeal but may not call witnesses or introduce new evidence on its own behalf. If an institution is appealing an adverse accreditation decision, the institution is permitted to designate "institutional representatives" to attend the hearing. Individuals designated as institutional representatives must be employees of the institution or must have been employed by the institution at the time of the site visit. The institution must include the names of its institutional representatives, if any, in its brief.
- 6) If the appellant is appealing an adverse accreditation decision, the chair of the BOE team and the chair of the UAB audit team may also participate by teleconference in the hearing. Panel members may question institutional representatives, the BOE team chair, and the UAB audit team chair during the hearing.

- 7) The Panel prepares a written report that conveys the basis of its findings and action taken on the appeal and submits that report to the institution within two days after the action taken by the Panel. If the appeal is not upheld by the Review Panel, the decision of the original governing board becomes final as of the date of the Review Panel's decision and is subject to disclosure and notification procedures as described in NCATE's Policy for Dissemination of Information.

d. Costs of Review

All institutions that choose to appeal a UAB decision will pay a \$2,000 fee. Payment is not contingent on the Appeal Review Panel's decision. This fee helps cover the cost of convening a panel, compiling documents, and related staff time.

e. Access to Documents

In cases of accreditation decision reviews, Panel members, the BOE team chair, and the UAB audit committee will have access in NCATE's Accreditation Information Management System (AIMS) to the appeals document and pertinent action letters and reports.

f. Appeal of a State Unit Accreditation Decision

Any appeal of a state unit will follow the preceding NCATE procedures as closely as practical. The Review Panel for review of a state action will be composed of three members of the PRC with subsequent review by the EP Committee.

4. Title II Policies and Procedures

The USED requires all educator preparation units to submit annual Title II data. The information is necessary for accurate data collection and analysis of current trends in educator preparation within South Carolina. The information is also helpful for on-site review teams in evaluating educator preparation programs. Title II legislation also requires states to develop criteria for identifying units that are "low performing" or "at risk." In South Carolina, the designation of "low performing" or as "at risk" of being judged "low performing" is based on a combination of four factors that are considered for a two-year period:

- the accreditation status of the institution's educator preparation unit,
- ADEPT formal evaluation results (annual contract year),
- Praxis II subject/specialty area exam results, and
- Praxis II Principles of Learning and Teaching exam results.

The following standards apply for the "low-performing" and "at-risk" classifications:

- a. Accreditation status
  - approval with conditions = “at risk”
  - probation = “low performing”
- b. ADEPT formal evaluation results
  - from 90 percent to less than 95 percent pass = “at risk”
  - less than 90 percent pass = “low performing”
- c. Praxis II subject/specialty area exam results
  - from 75 percent to less than 80 percent pass = “at risk”
  - less than 75 percent pass = “low performing”
- d. Praxis II Principles of Learning and Teaching exam results
  - from 75 percent to less than 80 percent pass = “at risk”
  - less than 75 percent pass = “low performing”

If an institution is “at risk” or “low performing” in any of these areas, as defined by the standards above, that institution will be designated as *overall “at risk.”* If an institution is “at risk” or “low performing” in two or more of the areas, as defined by the standards above, the institution will be designated as *overall “low performing.”* Institutions with fewer than ten program completers per year will be judged on the basis of a three-year composite profile of their program completers.

Any institution designated *overall “at risk”* or *overall “low performing”* will have an opportunity to present data the following year to demonstrate that it no longer meets the “at-risk” or “low-performing” criteria.