

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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**Initial Certificate Guidelines:
Classroom Teaching Fields**

South Carolina State Board of Education

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The Legislative Mandate

S.C. Ann. § 59-26-30

SECTION 59-26-30. Cognitive assessments for teachers and teacher certification; examinations; regulations.

(A) In the area of cognitive assessments for teachers and teacher certification, the State Board of Education, acting through the State Department of Education, shall:

(1) adopt a basic skills examination in reading, writing, and mathematics that is suitable for determining whether students may be admitted fully into an undergraduate teacher education program. The examination must be designed so that results are reported in a form that shall provide colleges, universities, and students with specific information about his strengths and weaknesses. Procedures, test questions, and information from existing examinations must be validated in accordance with current legal requirements. The passing score on the examination shall be set at a level that reflects the degree of competency in the basic skills that, in the judgment of the State Board of Education, a prospective school teacher reasonably is expected to achieve;

(2) adopt nationally recognized teaching examinations that measure the cognitive teaching area competencies desired for initial job assignments in typical elementary and secondary schools in this State. The examinations shall contain a minimum amount of common or general knowledge questions. They shall be designed so that results are reported in a form that provide a student with specific information about the student's strengths and weaknesses. Procedures, test questions, and information from existing examinations and lists of validated teacher competencies are used to the maximum extent in the development of the examinations. An examination that is completely developed by an organization other than the special project may be considered for use as a whole only if the State Board of Education concludes that the development and maintenance of a specific area test is impractical or would necessitate exorbitant expenses. The examinations must be validated. The teaching examinations must be developed or selected only for those areas in which State Board of Education approved area examinations are not available;

(3) use nationally recognized specific teaching area examinations approved by the State Board of Education for certification purposes. The qualifying scores on the area examinations shall be set at the same level at which they are now set. The State Board of Education shall examine these levels to determine if adjustments are required. Periodic examinations shall be made to assure the validity of qualifying scores. The qualifying scores may be adjusted if new legal requirements or validity studies indicate the adjustments are necessary. In an area in which an area teaching examination approved by the State Board of Education is not available, the state board shall use the teaching examinations developed in accordance with this section for certification purposes as soon as those examinations are prepared, validated, and ready for use;

(4) report the results of the teaching examinations to the student in written form that provides specific information about the student's strengths and weaknesses. Every effort must be made to

report the results of the area examinations and common examinations in written form that provides specific information about the student's strengths and weaknesses;

(5) report to each teacher training institution in the State the performance of the institution's graduates on the teaching examinations. The report to the institution must be in a form that assists the institution in further identifying strengths and weaknesses in its teacher training programs;

(6) provide for the security and integrity of the tests that are administered under the certification program as currently provided by the State Department of Education;

(7) award a teaching certificate to a person who successfully completes the scholastic requirements for teaching at an approved college or university and the examination he is required to take for certification purposes;

(8) award a conditional teaching certificate to a person eligible to hold a teaching certificate who does not qualify for full certification under item (7) above provided the person has earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university with a major in a certification area for which the board has determined there exists a critical shortage of teachers, and the person has passed the appropriate teaching examination. The board may renew a conditional teaching certificate annually for a maximum of three years, if the holder of the certificate shows satisfactory progress toward completion of a teacher certification program prescribed by the board. In part, satisfactory progress is the progress that the holder of a conditional certificate should complete the requirements for full certification within three years of being conditionally certified;

State Board of Education Regulation 43-53

I. Types of Credential Classification

A. Initial Certificate

An initial certificate is valid for three years. Beyond the initial three-year validity period, teachers who do not yet meet the requirements for professional certification, but who are employed by a public school district at the induction or annual contract level, as defined in S.C. Code Ann. Section 59-26-40, may have their certificates extended annually at the request of the employing school district.

Teachers who hold initial certificates and are employed in a public school setting in a position that does not require certification or is not included in the ADEPT system may have their certificates extended annually for an indefinite period at the request of the employing school or school district, provided that certificate renewal requirements, as specified in Reg.43-55 (Renewal of Credentials) are met every five years.

Teachers who hold initial certificates and are employed in a nonpublic school educational setting may have their certificates extended annually for an indefinite period at the request of the

educational entity, provided that certificate renewal requirements, as specified in Reg.43-55 (Renewal of Credentials) are met every five years.

Teachers who hold initial certificates but who are not employed by a public school district in a position requiring certification at the time the initial certificate expires, and who have not otherwise met the requirements for professional certification, may reapply for an initial certificate at such time as they become employed by a public school district or private school, subject to the requirements for initial certification in effect at the time of reapplication. To qualify for an initial certificate, the applicant must fulfill the following requirements:

1. Earn a bachelor's or master's degree either from an institution that has a state-approved teacher education program and is accredited for general collegiate purposes by a regional accreditation association, or from a South Carolina institution that has programs approved for teacher education by the State Board of Education (SBE), or from an institution that has programs approved for teacher education by a national accreditation association with which the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has a partnership agreement. Professional education credit must be earned through an institution that has a teacher education program approved for initial certification.
2. Submit the required teaching content area examination score(s) and the required score on the examination of general professional knowledge (pedagogy) as adopted by the SBE for purposes of certification.
3. Undergo a criminal records check by the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) and a national criminal records check supported by fingerprints conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). If the applicant does not complete the initial certification process within eighteen months from the original date of application, the FBI fingerprint process must be repeated. Eligible applicants who have prior arrests and/or convictions must undergo a review by the SBE and be approved before a certificate may be issued. Background checks from other states or agencies are not transferable to South Carolina.

Initial Certificate Options for Classroom Teaching Fields

In order to be issued an Initial educator certificate following successful completion of an approved teacher preparation program at the undergraduate- or graduate-level, a candidate must demonstrate knowledge both of the subject area and of pedagogy on assessments approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) for the specific certification field.

For issuance of an educator certificate, a teacher candidate must meet one of two options as part of the *South Carolina Certification Assessment Program*.

Option 1: South Carolina Certification Assessment Program–Standard Plan

Eligibility

The candidate qualifying for certification under the *South Carolina Certification Assessment Program–Standard Plan* must meet all eligibility requirements and earn a passing score on the subject area and pedagogy assessments as adopted for the specific certification field by the State Board of Education.

Certificate

The eligible beginning educator qualifying under the *South Carolina Certification Assessment Program–Standard Plan* will be issued an Initial certificate valid for three school years.

Advancement

In order to advance from an Initial to a Professional certificate, the educator must successfully complete the state’s induction and summative evaluation requirements as part of South Carolina’s system for Assisting, Developing, and Evaluating Professional Teaching (ADEPT).

Option 2: South Carolina Certification Assessment Program–Alternate Plan

Eligibility

The candidate seeking certification under the *South Carolina Certification Assessment Program–Alternate Plan* must meet all eligibility requirements and earn a score that is within minus two (-2) standard errors of measurement (SEMs) of the passing score on the subject area and pedagogy assessments as adopted by the SBE for the specific certification field.

Certificate

At the request of an employing South Carolina school district, an eligible candidate seeking certification under this option may be issued a one-year Provisional Initial certificate at the request of an employing South Carolina public school district. The Provisional Initial certificate may be renewed up to two times at the request of the employing school district with documentation of the individual’s continued employment in a South Carolina public school. As

part of the annual request for certificate issuance, the hiring district must submit assurances that it will provide additional mentored support, coaching, and assistance to the educator and will carefully monitor the educator's progress toward successful completion of all requirements to advance to a renewable Professional certificate.

Advancement

In order to advance to a Professional certificate, the educator issued a Provisional Initial certificate must demonstrate

- I. three years of effective teaching in the specific certification field and related grade span through successful performance evaluations as part of the state's ADEPT system, including induction requirements and successful summative evaluation at the annual contract level; AND
- II. content competency in the subject area and knowledge of pedagogy as defined below.

A. Content Competency in the Subject Area

The educator seeking to advance from the Provisional Initial to a Professional certificate must demonstrate content competency in the subject area through one of the following means:

1. a qualifying score on the required subject area assessment for the certification field as part of the *South Carolina Certification Assessment Program—Standard Plan*; OR
2. a qualifying score on an approved teaching performance assessment (e.g., PPAT or edTPA) as adopted by the SBE; OR
3. successful completion of SCDE-approved micro-credential(s) in the subject area of the certification field; OR
4. a composite score of at least 2.76 during the Annual Summative evaluation process on the South Carolina Teaching Standards (SCTS) 4.0 rubric.

B. Knowledge of Pedagogy

The educator seeking to advance from the Provisional Initial to a Professional certificate must demonstrate knowledge of pedagogy through one of the following means:

1. a qualifying score on a pedagogy assessment for the grade span of the certification field as part of the *South Carolina Certification Assessment Program—Standard Plan*; OR
2. a composite score of at least 2.76 during the Annual Summative evaluation process on the South Carolina Teaching Standards (SCTS) 4.0 rubric.

Requirements and Limitations

The following requirements and limitations apply to eligibility for issuance of a Provisional Initial certificate.

- The Provisional Initial certificate option is limited to three consecutive school years. The candidate must complete all requirements for advancement to the Professional certificate within the three-year period.
- An educator previously issued a South Carolina educator certificate that has expired is not eligible for the Provisional Initial certificate option.
- Consistent with requirements of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Provisional Initial certificate option is not available to a candidate seeking certification in any field of Special Education.
- An educator who held a Provisional certificate for 2020-21 and 2021-22 issued under emergency flexibility extended to educators due to the COVID-19 public health emergency is eligible for one additional Provisional Initial certificate under the allowances of this option. The candidate must meet all other eligibility requirements and earn assessment scores meeting the requirements of the *South Carolina Certification Assessment Program– Alternate Plan*.

The *South Carolina Certification Assessment Program–Alternate Plan* does not apply to

- educators seeking certification in Service and Leadership fields,
- certified teachers seeking to add additional classroom teaching fields to their educator certificate, or
- educators seeking a letter of eligibility for Initial certification for any purpose.

The SCDE Office of Educator Services will review data on Provisional Initial certificates annually with a comprehensive evaluation after three years to determine effectiveness of the option and recommend changes to or continuation of the option.