

South Carolina Educator Preparation Guidelines: Standards, Policies, and Procedures

National and State Accreditation Decisions

Pursuant to Regulation 43-90, Program Approval Standards for South Carolina Teacher Education Institutions, each educator preparation providers (EPP) must meet the standards of the national accreditation association with which the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) has a partnership agreement. In 2015, the SCDE established an agreement with the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Public institutions must seek and receive national accreditation; private institutions may seek national accreditation or meet national standards through a state process that is aligned with that of the national accreditor. Whether a provider seeks national accreditation or state approval, statutory authority to determine accreditation decisions for and impose sanctions against teacher education programs is granted to the State Board of Education (SBE).

Every seven years, the accreditation status of a provider must be reviewed and reaffirmed either through a national or state process. These processes involve the EPP submitting program reports for each area in which it offers a certification program and an institutional report (i.e., self-study) at the provider level. In completing the comprehensive self-study, the EPP must provide evidence for all national provider standards adopted by the SBE (i.e., the appropriate level CAEP standards) and adhere to all processes established in the designated accreditation handbook and related accreditation policies and resources. Additionally, the EPP must provide evidence that it meets all South Carolina requirements as established by the SBE.

To ensure consistency between national and state accreditation reviews and decisions, South Carolina's state accreditation process is aligned with that of CAEP and utilizes similar structures and terminology.

National Accreditation Processes

In a national review, the CAEP Accreditation Council determines a provider's accreditation status after considering the site team's report and reviewing documentation and evidence submitted by the provider as part of the accreditation process. CAEP subsequently sends written notification to the provider and the SCDE of the accreditation decision and findings relative to individual standards. The PRC will then review the notification from CAEP and forward the recommendation to the SBE to determine the final accreditation status of the provider.

Findings within Standards to Determine Accreditation Decisions

Accreditation decisions are based on findings relative to all standards and components within standards. Findings regarding an overall standard may identify areas for improvement and stipulations; definitions below are adapted from CAEP.

- **Area for Improvement (AFI):** An AFI is a statement issued by the review team or the Accreditation Council that describes a weakness in evidence or a component within a standard. An AFI must be improved by the time of the next accreditation visit, and the EPP must document progress, remediating any AFI as part of its Annual Report.
- **Stipulation:** A stipulation refers to a statement issued by the review team or the Accreditation Council that indicates a serious deficiency in meeting one or more components within a standard or the standard in its entirety. The EPP must correct any

stipulation within the designated time period, typically two years, to achieve accreditation status. Failure to correct the condition(s) leading to the stipulation may result in probation or revocation of accreditation.

Accreditation Decisions and Provider Status

CAEP's Accreditation Council renders decisions regarding a provider's status based on evidence that standards are met holistically and makes determinations regarding an overall standard through the examination of any AFIs and stipulations.

Based on findings, CAEP will issue one of the following decisions.

- **Accreditation:** Accreditation is granted for seven years if the EPP meets all standards and components, even if AFIs are identified in the final report of the CAEP Accreditation Council. The period of any extension granted to a provider will be deducted from the seven years.
- **Accreditation with Stipulation(s):** Accreditation with Stipulation(s) is granted for two years if an EPP receives one or more stipulations but all standards are met. Within the two-year period, the EPP must submit a targeted response to the stipulation(s) for subsequent review by a site team during a virtual review. The CAEP Accreditation Council will review the resulting site visit report and consider if conditions are met for removal of the stipulation(s).
- **Probationary Accreditation:** Probationary accreditation is granted for two years when an EPP does not meet one of the standards. Failure by the provider to submit a response to the stipulation within a two-year period results in revocation. Failure to correct the condition leading to the stipulation within the specified two-year period may result in revocation.
- **Denial** (for initial) or **Revocation** (for continuing) of accreditation occurs if an EPP does not meet two or more of the standards. In a case where accreditation is revoked or denied, the EPP can begin the application process after one year from the date in which the final decision was made.

If accreditation is denied or revoked by CAEP and subsequently the SBE, the provider must notify all enrolled candidates of the change in its accreditation status. Candidates may complete the program in which they are enrolled and be recommended for certification; however, the provider cannot admit new candidates to any educator preparation program within the scope of the accreditation review.

State Accreditation Processes

In a state review, the PRC functions in a role consistent with that of the CAEP Accreditation Council and considers the site team's report and the documentation and evidence submitted by the EPP during the accreditation process. The PRC renders a decision regarding the provider's accreditation status and findings relative to individual standards. The PRC then forwards this recommendation to the SBE to determine the final accreditation status of the provider.

Findings within Standards to Determine Accreditation Decisions

Consistent with CAEP processes, the state review team and PRC will identify AFIs and stipulations relative to each standard.

State Accreditation Decisions and Provider Status

Acting as an accreditation council, the PRC renders decisions regarding a provider's status based on evidence that standards are met holistically and makes determinations regarding an overall standard through the examination of any AFIs and stipulations.

Based on findings, the PRC will issue one of the following decisions for SBE consideration.

- **Accreditation:** Accreditation is granted for seven years if the EPP meets all standards and components, even if AFIs are identified in the final report of the appropriate Accreditation Council.
- **Accreditation with Stipulation(s):** Accreditation with Stipulation(s) is granted for two years if an EPP receives one or more stipulations. Within the two-year period, the EPP must submit a targeted response to the stipulation(s) for subsequent review by a site team during a virtual review. The PRC will review the resulting site visit report and consider if conditions are met for removal of the stipulation(s).
- **Probationary Accreditation:** Probationary accreditation is granted for two years when an EPP does not meet one of the standards. Failure by the provider to submit a response to the stipulation within a two-year period results in revocation. Failure to correct the condition leading to the stipulation within the specified two-year period may result in revocation.
- **Denial (Initial) or Revocation (Continuing):** **Denial** (for initial) or **Revocation** (for continuing) of accreditation occurs if an EPP does not meet two or more of the standards. In a case where accreditation is revoked or denied, the EPP can begin the application process after one year from the date in which the final decision was made.

If accreditation is denied or revoked by the SBE, the provider must notify all enrolled candidates of the change in its accreditation status. Candidates may complete the program in which they are enrolled and be recommended for certification; however, the provider cannot admit new candidates to any educator preparation program within the scope of the accreditation review.

Review of South Carolina Requirements during the National or State Accreditation Processes

Providers must demonstrate evidence of meeting requirements for educator preparation programs established in South Carolina statutes, SBE regulations and guidelines, and SCDE policies during the cyclical accreditation process. If any state requirements are deemed not met as part of the findings of the accreditation review, the PRC will require the provider to submit a follow-up report in which the provider must demonstrate evidence of having fully met all state requirements or indicate a timeline for correcting the deficiencies. A provider that indicates a timeline for improvements must submit an additional report as specified by the PRC to document evidence that requirements have been met.

The state requirements must be corrected within two years from the accreditation decision date or a focused site-visit will be scheduled to review how state standards are being implemented

and met at the provider and program levels. SCDE staff and the PRC will review all follow-up reporting and provide updates to the SBE regarding the provider's progress. The SBE may impose sanctions for failure to correct deficiencies relative to state requirements.

Appeal of a National Accreditation Decision

EPPs who are accredited through CAEP must use the appeals process as outlined in the most current [CAEP accreditation process](#).

Appeal of a State Accreditation Decision

Any appeal of an accreditation decision issued through the state process will follow the CAEP procedures as closely as practical. The provider must notify the PRC of its intent to appeal the accreditation decision within fifteen days of the notification. The review panel for an appeal of a state decision will be comprised of three members of the PRC with subsequent review by the Education Professions Committee of the SBE.