Certification Officer Training FAQs Training presented virtually on September 23rd & September 24th, 2021

General

1. Can you explain what AskTED is and where to find it? Why and how should Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) use AskTED?

AskTed is the database that houses information about the public schools and approved charter schools in Texas. It is linked at the top of the TEA website at tea.texas.gov. For candidate placement purposes, a campus must be in either AskTED or in the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission (TEPSAC) database to be considered a "TEA-approved" placement for field-based experiences (FBEs), clinical teaching, internship, or practicum experiences.

- 2. Is it acceptable to use links instead of actual documents for our program review? For a program's Continuing Approval Review, specific candidate documents are required to be submitted to TEA. Due to potential accessibility and security issues with links, it is strongly recommended for Educator Preparation Programs to submit actual documents for the program's Continuing Approval Review. Links are acceptable in the Status Report where TEA specifically requests a link.
- 3. Are EPPs required to keep "grades" for coursework, or could they keep "completed/not completed" for each course?

The EPP is required to track and retain evidence of completion of coursework and other EPP requirements. It is the responsibility of the EPP to determine the best way to track the completion of program requirements.

4. How do I get on the mailing list for the EPP newsletter?

You can use this <u>link</u> to subscribe to the Weekly EPP Newsletter. The newsletters are also posted on the <u>Texas Educator Preparation Program Weekly Newsletter</u> page which is linked from the <u>Program Provider Resources</u> page on the TEA website.

Admission

1. If a candidate seeks program admission in the month of April and obtains a bachelor's degree during the 2nd summer session, when should the candidate apply for admission? If a candidate is contingently admitted in April, then the candidate would need to have the degree conferred at end of that spring semester, so would likely be a May graduate. If a candidate is contingently admitted during the summer, the candidate must have the degree conferred at the end of the summer semester. Individual summer sessions are seen as one semester for EPP admission purposes. Contingent admission rules can be found in 19 TAC §227.15.

2. Does the 7-day window to report a candidate's admission start once we admit them or when they return their acceptance letter? Does the 7-calendar day admission window include weekends and/or holidays?

EPPs are required to report a candidate's admission within 7 calendar days of the candidate's admission date. The 7-day window starts from the admission date identified in the EPP's written offer of admission. The seven-calendar day admission window includes weekends and holidays.

3. Can we upload a candidate's admission records before the formal admission date identified in the formal offer of admission letter?

No, admission records cannot be created before the formal admission date. The EPP will report a candidate's admission to TEA within 7 days after the candidate's admission date.

4. Can the formal admission date be dated for a later date? For example, would an admission letter that is sent out on October 1, 2021, but identifies the admission date as January 1, 2022, be acceptable?

Yes, the date of notification (letter date) would be the date the applicant was notified of admission. The admission date will be the date the applicant will be enrolled in the EPP and may begin completing preparation and certification requirements through the EPP.

5. What if we are not able to upload a candidate's admission records to ECOS within 7 days of formal admission due to a transfer form pending from another university to release the candidate?

The applicant should not be admitted while enrolled in another EPP. It is recommended that the EPP has an internal policy that requires an applicant to submit the transfer form (if applicable) as an admission requirement. This allows the EPP to gather the required admission documents prior to offering contingency or formal admission.

6. Can admission records be housed in our university's admission system and not in our departmental in-house records?

Yes, the EPP can determine how to retain candidate records as long as records retention meets requirements in 19 TAC §228.40(d) and ensures the EPP can access the records as needed.

7. Please explain when a candidate would take the Pre-Admission Content Test (PACT) in Essential Academic Skills.

An applicant would take the TX PACT 700: Essential Academic Skills exam prior to EPP admission if the applicant does not meet the minimum GPA or content hour requirement for one of these certificate areas: Core Subjects: Early Childhood–Grade 6; Deaf and Hard of Hearing: Early Childhood–Grade 12; or Special Education: Early Childhood–Grade 12. An applicant would also take the TX PACT 700 exam if the EPP required it as an additional admission requirement.

8. Is a PACT available for undergraduate students trying to admit to the EPP for teacher initial certification who doesn't have the required coursework hours for the certification area they are seeking?

Yes, since there is not a degree requirement for the <u>TX PACT</u> exam undergraduate applicants are able to take the TX PACT exam for EPP admission. The TX PACT exam would be required if the applicant does not have the minimum GPA or content hours for the certificate sought or if the

EPP requires the TX PACT exam as an additional admission requirement.

9. Candidates are asking about limited options for gender and ethnicity when creating their educator account. Will TEA be adding more options in the future?

This is great feedback to hear from the field. We can look at options for candidates when creating an educator account that aligns with other systems used in Texas.

10. Is there a PowerPoint on how to create an educator account to be able to show candidates?

Yes. TEA has provided Educator account setup instructions that include step-by-step instructions with screenshots detailing how to set up an educator account. The instructions can be found on TEA's Certification page.

Educator Certification

- Is the application process for a non-renewable permit the same as an emergency permit?
 Yes. School district personnel with access to ECOS for Entities will select "Apply for
 Nonrenewable Permit" in the dropdown menu.
- 2. Is it possible for an EPP to find out how many students get certified within an academic year via ECOS?

Yes. EPPs can find out how many candidates have been certified by sorting the certificate recommendation list for "Certified". This list may also be downloaded using the link at the bottom of the "Entity Recommendation List" page.

3. Can a candidate switch from an emergency certificate to an internship once they meet internship certificate requirements?

Once a candidate meets the requirements for an Intern or Probationary certificate, the EPP may recommend the certificate. If a candidate was on a permit, be advised that the permit counts as one of the three temporary certificates a candidate may have prior to standard certification. Please note that a permit cannot run concurrently with an intern or probationary certificate. Reference 19 TAC \$230.36(c)(4)(A-D).

4. Can an emergency permit be issued by a school district for a candidate in an EPP if the EPP provides that certification area?

No. If the EPP offers the certification category on the permit, the candidate will need to work towards certification in that category. See 19 TAC §230.71(j) for the specific rule.

5. What is the difference in requirements for Intern and Probationary certificates for principal candidates? Does the candidate need to pass the PASL for a probationary certificate? Per intern certificate requirements found in 19 TAC §230.36(e) and probationary certificate requirements found in 19 TAC §230.37(e), principal candidates are required to pass the TEXES #268 content exam. A passing PASL score is not required for the Principal as Instructional Leader intern and probationary certificate.

- 6. When a district requests to put a candidate on an emergency permit the EPP is required to provide a deficiency letter. Is there a standard form that is used for the deficiency letter? The EPP is allowed to create its own template for the deficiency letter (also known as the certification plan). The requirements for what must be included in the certification plan are found in 19 TAC §230.79(a)(2)(A).
- 7. I recommended someone for the certification and a few minutes later I found out that I shouldn't have done that. Is there a way to stop it without my getting any penalty?

 If the certificate has not issued yet, then the recommendation can be removed by EPP staff by locating the candidate in the certificate recommendation list and using the "Remove Selected Recommendations" button to set the certificate back to "Applied" status. If the recommended certificate has been issued, EPP staff should reach out to the assigned Education Specialist at TEA as soon as possible to have the certificate pulled back.
- 8. Does the candidate receive an email when a certificate is issued? Is the message that they are recommended only or certified?

Candidates receive automatic status emails from ECOS when 1) the application is submitted by the applicant, and 2) when the application is recommended by the EPP. The applicant receives an additional email regarding fingerprinting after the application is submitted. Candidates can check their certifications held through their TEAL account of the Certificate Lookup option which can be found on TEA's Certification page.

9. Is there a time limit for a candidate's status to remain as "Recommended"? Should the EPP just leave it as it is as TEA takes over from there?

Applications may remain pending at "Recommended" status indefinitely. A few things can cause the certificate to not issue after it has been recommended: (1) fingerprinting may not be complete or updated in ECOS; (2) the application fee may not have been paid; or (3) there could be a warning or an active investigation. The EPP should work with their candidates to monitor certificate issuance. If there are questions about certificate issuance, EPPs, and their candidates may contact the appropriate division at TEA for assistance. Fee inquiries will be handled by Certification, fingerprinting questions may be submitted to the Fingerprinting department, and questions about warnings will need to be directed to the Investigations team. The best way to contact these departments for a fee transfer from Certification and investigations inquiries from Fingerprinting is via the Help Desk.

10. If someone has been recommended for the Educational Diagnostician certification and passed the content exam, would that certification be on their teaching certificate?

If the Educational Diagnostician certificate has been issued, then it will appear on the educator's certificate with any other certificates held by that educator. If it does not appear, then the certificate was prevented from issuing for some reason. The EPP and/or educator may contact TEA to determine the problem. EPPs can view the certificates held by a candidate using Certificate Lookup or Educator Information \rightarrow Educator Search in ECOS. All certificates an educator holds, valid and expired, are listed.

Finisher Records List

1. Are EPPs required to formally advise a student of their enrollment status?

The EPP is not required to advise a candidate of their enrollment status unless the candidate leaves the program. The EPP could notify finisher candidates of their status in the event the candidate completes all program requirements but does not certify. 19 TAC §228.20(h) requires the EPP to have a published exit policy for dismissal of candidates that is reviewed and signed by candidates upon admission. The amount of time a candidate can be inactive before being removed from the enrollment list would be part of that exit policy. Remember to retain the signed exit policy document in the candidate's record.

2. Where do you find the "request to change the certification category" form?

EPPs may create their own form for a candidate to request to change the certificate category from the category chosen at admission. The candidate must make the request in writing. The EPP will keep the written request in the candidate's file. If the EPP accepts the request, the EPP must prepare the candidate and grant test approval in the new certificate category. Reference 19 TAC §228.40(c).

3. If a candidate withdrew from our program, was removed in ECOS, and then changed their mind to come back, can we re-admit them?

Yes. If a candidate withdraws from an EPP and wants to come back to continue certification in the same class (e.g., School Counselor) or category (e.g., Science 7-12), the EPP would readmit the candidate and create a new admission record with a new admission date. The candidate would be required to meet the current admission criteria.

4. If a candidate completes the program but does not complete the practicum and is not released to test, should they be "Removed" if no reply to communication over the past year or two?

By definition, a completer, or finisher, is someone that has completed all program requirements. If a practicum is not completed, then a candidate will not have completed the program. The candidate would remain at "Other Enrolled" status until all program requirements are complete. If the candidate meets the exit policy criteria, such as the inactive status and lack of communication, the EPP would remove the candidate from the Finisher Records List and remove test approval.

5. If a candidate leaves the university for a semester, is the EPP required to remove the candidate from the program's Finisher Records List and remove test approval? What if the candidate is working on testing requirements, but not technically taking any courses? The university undergraduate or post-bac candidate must be enrolled in the university to be enrolled in the EPP, so the EPP exit policy should take into consideration the university rules about withdrawal. Unless the candidate is a program completer/finisher, the candidate cannot test under approval of the EPP if the candidate is not enrolled in the EPP. If the candidate is not actively completing program requirements, the EPP would remove the candidate from the program's Finisher Records List. If the candidate has completed all program requirements and is a finisher of the EPP but has not completed the testing requirement, the EPP would identify the candidate as a finisher and provide test approval. Reference 19 TAC §230.21(b).

Fingerprinting

1. Is there a step-by-step process for fingerprinting procedures that is posted on the TEA website that EPPs can share with candidates?

TEA's Fingerprinting team has provided a <u>video tutorial</u> of the fingerprinting process. Please share this link with your candidates.

2. How can I verify if a candidate met the fingerprinting requirement?

EPPs can look at a candidate's fingerprint status in ECOS through Educator Information → Educator Search → Fingerprint Status with either the candidate's TEA ID number or social security number.

3. What is the difference in the criminal history background check requirement for clinical teachers and for candidates when applying for standard certification?

The requirement for clinical teachers or student teachers is a name-based criminal history background check (19 TAC §227.1(b)(2)). This will be performed by the district or school system. The district can choose to fingerprint clinical teachers through the substitute process. The EPP can work with the district to ensure this process is completed. The EPP can add this to a district and clinical teaching agreement or choose how to best communicate this requirement with districts or school systems. At the time an applicant applies for certification, a national criminal history background check is required, which includes fingerprinting. This is the fingerprinting process initiated when a candidate applies for certification per 19 TAC §227.1(b)(1).

Educator Testing

1. How can I access Results Analyzer?

EPPs' score reporting contacts can access Results Analyzer with the following link: https://edreports.nesinc.com/TX/. For assistance accessing Results Analyzer, email es-raproductsupport@pearson.com.

2. Is there training for Results Analyzer?

Yes, Pearson provides Results Analyzer training throughout the academic year for EPPs' score reporting contacts. These training, in terms of dates, times, and links to join, are referenced in Pearson's bi-monthly newsletter. Additionally, Pearson has provided an online user guide for EPPs in Results Analyzer. A Quick Reference Guide is available in the Exam Results Reporting for EPPs section on Pearson's Interpreting Candidate Exam Results page.

3. How can I subscribe to Pearson's bi-monthly newsletter?

You can email Pearson at <u>texas.support@pearson.com</u> for assistance with subscribing to the Pearson newsletter.

4. Are candidates required to wait 45 days to apply for their first test-limit waiver or does the application timeline follow the 30-day exam retake waiting period?

The State Board for Educator Certification has defined the waiver application process in Chapter

<u>230, Subchapter C of the Texas Administrative Code.</u> The code establishes that a request for a waiver must not be postmarked earlier than 45 calendar days after an unsuccessful exam attempt.

5. Who can provide educational activities for the test-limit waiver?

A <u>list of TEA-approved providers</u> will show you all the vendors who are approved to offer educational activities. You may also use pre-approved providers as described on page 6 of the waiver application. The following entities may provide and/or sponsor activities as pre-approved providers and do not have to register with TEA:

- State Board for Educator Certification
- Texas Education Agency including the Texas Gateway
- Accredited institutions of higher education recognized by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (<u>THECB</u>). This includes out-of-state institutions of higher education recognized by the THECB.
- Regional education service centers (<u>ESCs</u>)
- Texas public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools (<u>AskTED</u>)
- Accredited private schools recognized by the Texas Private School Accreditation Commission and International Association for Learner Driven Schools (IALDS) (TPSAC and IALDS)

6. Does the test-limit waiver application fee include the exam fee, or will candidates need to pay their exam fee in addition to the test-limit waiver application fee?

The \$164 fee is solely for the processing of the waiver application. It does not cover the cost of the exam and is non-refundable. The test-limit waiver application fee is separate from the exam fee.

7. Does a candidate's last test attempt, approved through the test-limit waiver, count towards the EPP's accountability test pass rate indicator?

It may. An exam taken under a test limit waiver is associated with the EPP if the candidate is enrolled in an EPP. If the attempt is the first or second attempt approved by that EPP then the passing or failing score on the attempt will be assigned to the EPP as per the pass rate calculation in 19 TAC §229.4.

8. If a finisher candidate comes back to the EPP to get test approval, will the test results affect our pass rate?

For candidates admitted after December 26th, 2016, the exam pass rate will include a candidate's first two exam attempts with exam approval from the EPP, including finisher candidates. Please see 19 TAC §229.4(a)(1)(B) for additional guidance.

9. If a candidate is identified as a program finisher, is the EPP required to give test approval? Yes, per 19 TAC §230.21(b), an EPP is required to provide test approval to a candidate identified as a "Finisher". A finisher is someone who completed all program requirements such as coursework, training, and obtained the required successful recommendations from the outcome of the clinical experience (ex: clinical teaching).

10. What's the difference between TExES #117 and TExES #217 exams?

The TEXES #217 is a redesigned exam for the English Language Arts and Reading 4-8 certification. TEA recommends you review preparation manuals for both exams on Pearson's website. You can find a breakdown of the domains, competencies, and test frameworks for each exam on the Person website.

11. What is the last date a candidate can be recommended for certification using a passing score on the TEXES #117-English Language Arts and Reading (ELAR) 4-8 exam?

Candidates will have until 10/30/2022 to apply and get recommended for their standard certificate using exam #117. Please see the <u>ELAR 4-8 informational one-pager</u> that addresses timelines and other frequently asked questions related to the exam launch, program requirements, and candidate preparation resources.

12. Can test approval only be done at the main campus of an institution?

The TEA-approved EPP is responsible for all the institutions under its jurisdiction; so, if the EPP has expanded to additional sites, the activity at those sites is under the jurisdiction of that EPP. For example, if the candidate is enrolled in EPP A under CDN 123456, then test approval and recommendation for certificates will come from EPP A under CDN 123456. The TEA-approved EPP will provide test approval per 19 TAC §228.40(d) and/or 19 TAC §230.21(b) once the candidate demonstrates test readiness or once the candidate is identified as a finisher; whichever comes first.

13. Does the test-limit waiver apply to graduate candidates as well?

Teacher and non-teacher candidates, regardless of their certification route, are limited to 5 attempts on <u>any</u> certification test under <u>Texas Education Code §21.048(a-1)</u>. EPPs and candidates can find test-limit waiver information on <u>TEA's Educator Testing page</u>.

14. Does TEA recommend requiring candidates to pass their certification exams prior to starting clinical teaching?

The EPP can determine the best process for providing candidates with test approval once the candidate demonstrates test readiness. The EPP should not require candidates to pass certification exams to receive a course grade or to obtain a degree. A passing score on a TEXES certification exam is a certification requirement and not a program requirement.

15. If a candidate comes back to the EPP after 5 years and requests test approval, can the EPP have it written in their handbook that there will be coursework required along with the fees? 19 TAC §228.40(d) provides EPPs with the authority to require a finisher candidate to complete additional coursework and/or training if the candidate is requesting test approval from the EPP in an area where the standards and/or test have changed since the candidate completed the EPP or if the candidate has returned to the EPP five or more years after completing the EPP. If the candidate is identified as a Finisher in an area where the standards and test have not

Note: EPPs should include this in the program handbook so candidates are aware of the test approval policy.

changed, the EPP will be required to provide test approval per 19 TAC §230.21(b).

16. Where can I find test approval TAC rules?

EPPs can find test approval rules in 19 TAC §228.40(d) and 19 TAC §230.21(b). Please review all TAC rules regarding test approval. EPP staff who provide test approval to candidates should be aware of the rules and understand when test approval can be provided.

Internships & Training

1. Is an intern someone that does a year-long program and not someone who does a one-semester student teaching experience?

TEA considers an "Intern" to be a candidate who is completing an internship. An internship is defined in 19 TAC §228.2(24) as, "A paid supervised classroom teacher assignment for one full school year at a public school accredited by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) or other school approved by the TEA for this purpose that may lead to completion of a standard certificate." An intern would hold either an Intern certificate or a Probationary certificate. Internship requirements can be found in 19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)B). TEA considers a candidate who is completing clinical teaching of any duration to be a "clinical teacher". Clinical teaching requirements can be found in 19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(A).

2. What if we have a teacher candidate who is identified as a program finisher (completed coursework, clinical teaching with the successful recommendations), passed the content test, but is lacking the PPR exam, and has found a teaching position. Can we place them on an Intern certificate and require them to come back to the university and retake clinical teaching (as an intern) so that we follow the intern rules?

No. A finisher candidate cannot return to the EPP to work in an internship since the candidate completed all program requirements, including the supervised clinical experience. If the candidate needs to take the PPR exam to meet certification requirements, the EPP will provide test approval and recommend the candidate for standard certification once all certification requirements are met.

3. Is a candidate required to have an internship location confirmed before requesting the internship certificate?

Yes, to recommend an Intern or Probationary certificate in ECOS, the EPP is required to identify the internship placement. The EPP can use the Statement of Eligibility document to verify the internship placement when recommending the Intern or Probationary certificate.

4. We were under the impression that we could recommend a finisher for an Intern or Probationary certificate if they re-enrolled in a supervisory course at the university for that year. Is that not true?

If a candidate is identified as an EPP finisher that means the candidate has completed all program requirements, including the supervised clinical experience, and is not able to re-enroll in an EPP to complete additional requirements in the same finisher certificate category (ex: Math 7-12) or class (ex: Principal). If the Finisher candidate is not standard certified due to needing to pass the certification exam(s), the EPP should advise the candidate to take the required exam(s) and apply for standard certification once passing exam scores are achieved.

5. If a field supervisor is not allowed on a campus to observe our teacher candidate, can the field supervisor conduct virtual observations?

No. Current TAC rules do not allow teacher candidates to be observed virtually for the 2021-2022 academic year. TEA sent out a <u>To The Administrator Addressed letter</u> on September 2, 2021 advising Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to work with EPPs to ensure field supervision requirements can be met.

- 6. If a candidate in an alternative certification program has been teaching in a charter school for a couple of years, does the candidate still need to complete the field-based experience hours? 19 TAC §228.35(e)(1)(C) allows for up to 15 out of the 30 field-based experience hours to be met as a long-term substitute. A candidate's prior teaching experience that occurred outside of EPP enrollment cannot count towards FBE requirements.
- 7. Senate Bill 1590 proposed that an Intern can be observed virtually. Has this bill passed? This bill was passed and requires the SBEC to make rules that may allow for some virtual observations. The SBEC will soon take up rulemaking regarding Senate Bill 1590. We will share more updates as we have them. Due to the attenuated timeline for SBEC rulemaking, it is likely that the new rules will not be effective until the 2022-2023 school year.
- 8. Is the Governor's Declaration of Disaster that allowed a 20% decrease in a candidate's clinical teaching, internship, or practicum still in effect, or are candidates required to meet the training duration TAC requirements (pre-COVID requirements)?

The Governor's Declaration of Disaster was recently renewed in December 2021 so EPPs can utilize the 20% decrease if it becomes necessary. Since it was in place at the beginning of this academic year (August 2021), the 20% reduction allowance can be applicable for candidates who started clinical teaching, an internship, or practicum in August 2021, if it becomes necessary.

Note: The 20% reduction does not reduce the number of observations required. The EPP will conduct the required observations as identified in 19 TAC §228.35(g) or 19 TAC §228.35(h).

- 9. Can non-teacher candidates completing an internship have virtual observations?

 Yes, 19 TAC §228.35(h)(3) allows for virtual observations to occur for non-teacher candidates. All formal observations, conducted on the candidate's site in a face-to-face setting and those conducted virtually, must include a pre-and post-conference.
- 10. Can a candidate's full-time teaching experience be obtained through an emergency permit and substituted for clinical teaching or internship? Which TAC should I refer to relating to this topic?

No. Teaching experience that occurs under an emergency permit does not count towards EPP requirements since a candidate is not observed by a field supervisor while working on a permit. Additionally, a candidate must hold an Intern or Probationary certificate while completing an internship per 19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(B)(iv). The emergency permit takes away one year of the three years candidates are allowed to teach while holding an Intern or Probationary certificate.

11. How many observations are required for non-teacher candidates completing a practicum through an internship?

Per 19 TAC §228.35(h)(1-3), an EPP must provide a minimum of one formal observation within each the first, second, and final third of the practicum. The program should notify field supervisors of the practicum observation frequency requirement to ensure field observations are occurring as required.

Data

1. What does RFC stand for?

RFC is the acronym for "Request for Correction" of Finisher Records for a Previous Reporting Year. An EPP would submit this form for TEA to edit a candidate's status on the EPP's Finisher Records List (FRL) in a closed reporting year (e.g., 2019 – 2020).

2. Can an EPP submit an RFC form with multiple candidates, or should the EPP submit one form for each candidate?

Yes, an EPP may submit an RFC with multiple candidates on it. The form allows for five rows to be added in one RFC form.

- 3. Is DocuSign an acceptable digital signature for EPP-related documents signed by a candidate? Yes, DocuSign is an acceptable digital signature for EPP-related documents. Make sure the EPP can retain all candidate related documents as required in 19 TAC §228.40(f).
- 4. What if the certificate correction needed is discovered after the six weeks window? If the certificate correction is discovered after the six-week window, the hiring school district/campus and the EPP must work together to ensure the candidate is in an appropriate placement that corresponds with their issued certificate(s).
- 5. Where does the EPP go in TEAL to process payments for certificate corrections?

 Select the "Educator Search" tab in ECOS, search the candidate by the TEA ID or SSN, select the "Special Requests and Services" tab, from the options available. Select "\$78.00 Standard, Probationary, Intern, and VIT", and then select the "Pay Now" button. Follow the directions on the screen to complete the payment. Reminder: Payments for certificate corrections cannot be completed by the candidate; they must be completed by the EPP through ECOS for "Entities Access".
- 6. Where can we view Field Supervisor Quality data for all EPPs?

The Field Observation Quality data are available through TEA's <u>Educator Preparation Data Dashboards</u>. EPPs can find more information about EPP data on TEA's <u>Consumer Information about EPPs</u> webpage.