



2017 – 2018 Continuing Approval Review Report

St. Mary's University (015-506)

PURPOSE

Texas Education Agency (TEA) Program Specialist, Kerri Elzie, conducted a five-year Continuing Approval Review of the educator preparation program (EPP), St. Mary's University (015-506), on May 14, 2018. Per 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.10(b), "...An entity approved by the SBEC under this chapter shall be reviewed at least once every five years...". Dr. Daniel J. Higgins was identified as the program Legal Authority and primary EPP contact for the review process. St. Mary's University was approved as an EPP September 11, 1971. At the beginning of the review, the EPP accreditation status was Accredited for the 2015-2016 academic year. During the progress of the review, the EPP accreditation status for the 2016-2017 academic year was released as Accredited. At the time of the review, St. Mary's University was approved to certify candidates in the following classes: Classroom Teacher, Principal, Reading Specialist, and Master Reading Teacher (MRT); however, the Reading Specialist and MRT programs do not have current enrollment.

Per 19 TAC §228.1(c), "all educator preparation programs are subject to the same standards of accountability, as required under Chapter 229 of this title." The TEA administers TAC required by the Texas legislature for the regulation of all EPPs in the state. (See the complete [TAC](#) for details.) The five-year Continuing Approval Review was conducted in a "Desk Review" format where EPP staff submitted requested documents to TEA for review.

The scope of this review included: 1) verifying compliance with Texas Administrative Code and Texas Education Code as applicable to all certification classes in all certification routes offered by the EPP; and 2) developing a plan for improvement based on review data, performance indicators identified in 19 TAC §229.4, and self-reported EPP information provided in the Status Report. A Compliance Plan and Action Plan were developed to address plans for quality improvement. Evidence of compliance was measured using a rubric aligned to TAC.

EPP staff participating in the review at various stages were: Dr. Daniel J. Higgins, Dr. Barry Crist, and Sarah Serrato.

DATA ANALYSIS

Information concerning compliance with TAC governing EPPs was collected by means. A Status Report and related program documents were submitted to TEA on April 30, 2018. Additional EPP documents, including records for 10 candidates, were submitted on May 14, 2018. Qualitative and quantitative methodologies of content analysis, cross-referencing, and triangulation of the data were used to evaluate the evidence.



2017 – 2018 Continuing Approval Review Report

FINDINGS, COMPLIANCE ISSUES and RECOMMENDATIONS

“Findings” indicate evidence collected during the review process. If the program is “not in compliance” with any identified component, the program should consult the TAC and correct the issue immediately. A “Compliance Plan” may be drafted during the review that identifies compliance issues to be addressed and a timeline for completion. “Recommendations” are suggestions for general program improvement and no follow up is required.

COMPONENT I: GOVERNANCE – 19 TAC §228.20

Findings

Component I: Governance was not fully reviewed, but TEA noted the following:

- The EPP is approved and accredited with the State Board for Educator Certification and the Southern Association of Colleges and the Schools Commission on Colleges. The program has a status of Accredited for the 2016-2017 academic year. 19 TAC §228.10(a)
- The EPP confirmed in the Status Report that they meet the minimum requirements for support and resources, advisory committee membership, member training, and activities, and that they exceed the required frequency of meetings. The advisory committee meets twice annually, in the fall and in the spring. 19 TAC §228.20(b-c)
- The EPP meets requirements to offer classroom teacher, principal, and Master Reading Teacher (MRT) certification, although there are no MRT candidates. 19 TAC §228.10(d)
- The EPP has a calendar of activities posted on their website and in program materials. 19 TAC §228.20(g)

Based on the evidence presented, St. Mary’s University complies with 19 TAC §228 – Governance of Educator Preparation Programs.

Recommendations: None

COMPONENT II: ADMISSION - 19 TAC §227.10

Findings:

TEA reviewed the admission practices of the EPP in accordance with 19 TAC Chapter 227, and found that:

- Applicants were informed of requirements for admission via the Candidate Handbook. Candidates signed an agreement that they received the handbook at the beginning of clinical teaching. 19 TAC §227.1(c)



2017 – 2018 Continuing Approval Review Report

- All candidates met the degree requirement with original university transcripts. 19 TAC §227.10(a)(1)
- There were no candidates with degrees from countries outside the United States. 19 TAC §227.10(e)
- All candidates exceeded the minimum GPA requirements. 19 TAC §227.10(a)(3)(A)
- All teacher candidates demonstrated content knowledge with official transcripts. There was a record of the calculation of content hours and content GPA. 19 TAC §227.10(a)(4)
- Undergraduate teacher applicants met basic skills requirements with the THEA test and institutional requirements. Principal candidates held college degrees. 19 TAC §227.10(a)(5)
- All candidates met the English proficiency requirement by degrees earned in accredited United States universities or, in the case of undergraduates, institutional coursework. 19 TAC §227.10(a)(6)
- Candidates were required to complete an application for admission and submit to an interview. Responses to the interviews and scoring were provided. Principal candidates also had GRE or GMAT scores. 19 TAC §227.10(a)(7)
- Undergraduates must have junior-year standing (60 semester hours). Transcripts were evidence of completion. 19 TAC §227.10(a)(8)
- The teacher program requires a GPA of 2.6 and the principal program requires 2.7 for admission, both of which are higher than the state minimum of 2.5. 19 TAC §227.10(b)
- Candidates were given formal admission letters with dates of admission. 19 TAC §227.17(a)
- Undergraduate teacher candidates took some introductory education coursework prior to formal admission; however, this is permissible for university coursework if completed within the five years prior to admission. Two principal candidates were enrolled in some coursework prior to formal admission; however, the rule did not apply since the admission dates were prior to the rule change. 19 TAC §227.17(e) and 19 TAC §228.35(a)(5)(B).

Based on the evidence presented, St. Mary's University complies with 19 TAC §227 - Admission Criteria.

Recommendations:

EPP should establish a clear standard for scoring the interview and application process.



2017 – 2018 Continuing Approval Review Report

COMPONENT III: CURRICULUM – 19 TAC §228.30

The curriculum component was not reviewed; however, it should be noted that the EPP needs to select from the approved providers for mental health, substance abuse, and youth suicide training.

COMPONENT IV: PROGRAM DELIVERY AND ONGOING SUPPORT – 19 TAC §228.35

Findings:

TEA reviewed the admission practices of the EPP in accordance with 19 TAC Chapter 228.35, and found that:

- The EPP maintains program benchmarks and degree plans that indicate that they are providing candidates with adequate preparation and training. 19 TAC §228.35(a)(1)
- The EPP's coursework and training appears to meet requirements. Coursework for mental health, substance abuse, and youth suicide is not through an approved provider. 19 TAC §228.35(a)(2)
- Candidates completed coursework and training prior to issuance of a standard certification. 19 TAC §228.35(a)(3)
- The EPP has a policy for acceptance of military training and experience. 19 TAC §228.35(a)(5)(A)
- The EPP has a policy for acceptance of prior experience, education, or training from other EPPs. 19 TAC §228.35(a)(5)(B)
- Benchmark documents, degree plans, and transcripts reflect completion of at least 300 hours for initial standard classroom certification. 19 TAC §228.35(b)
- Teacher candidates completed the required field-based experience prior to clinical teaching. 19 TAC §228.35(b)(1)
- Teacher candidates completed the required coursework prior to clinical teaching. 19 TAC §228.35(b)(2)
- Two principal candidates completed all coursework and practicum. One candidate withdrew from the practicum. 19 TAC §228.35(c)
- Candidate completed the required number of hours of field-based experiences. One candidate did not have a record of reflections, and one candidate had only one reflection. 19 TAC §228.35(e)(1)(A)
- Teacher candidates completed a successful clinical teacher experience. 19 TAC §228.35(e)(2)(A)
- Except for one candidate, training records reflected a full range of professional responsibilities, including the start of the school year. 19 TAC § (e)(2)(F)



2017 – 2018 Continuing Approval Review Report

- Clinical teaching experiences took place in accredited public or private school, in an appropriate assignment, with qualified cooperating teachers and field supervisors. 19 TAC §228.35(e)(4) and (5)
- The EPP offers a two-semester principal practicum, which exceeds the state minimum. Two principal candidates completed practicums in appropriate placements with qualified site supervisors and field supervisors. One candidate withdrew from the practicum and did not finish all requirements. 19 TAC §228.35(e)(6)(A) and (B)
- Candidates placed in clinical teaching or practicum assignments were assigned appropriate cooperating teachers or site supervisors. 19 TAC §228.35(f)
- The cooperating teachers were trained and held the required credentials. 19 TAC §228.2(12)
- The site supervisors for principal practicum candidates were trained and held the required credentials. 19 TAC §228.2(30)
- The EPP provided scientifically-based training to cooperating teachers and site supervisors. 19 TAC §228.35(f)
- Field supervisors held the required credentials, were trained, and made the required initial contact. Interns received the required pre- and post-observation conferences and written feedback. Observation documents were signed by appropriate individuals. There was evidence of informal observations, coaching, and collaboration via email and observation logs. 19 TAC §228.35(g)
- Formal observations for teacher candidates met the duration, frequency, and format requirements. 19 TAC §228.35(g)(1-8)
- Principal candidates were assigned to field supervisors who held the required credentials and credentials. Field supervisors made the required initial contact, had required conferences with written feedback, had 3-5 observations with appropriate documentation. Feedback was provided to the site supervisor. The field supervisor provided informal observations and coaching, and collaborated with site supervisors. 19 TAC §228.35(h)
- Observations of principal practicum candidates conducted by field supervisors meet the requirements for duration, frequency, and format. 19 TAC §228.35(h)(1-4)
- Principal practicum candidates demonstrated proficiency in the standards as reflected on weekly logs. 19 TAC §241.10(b)

Based on evidence presented, St. Mary's University complies with 19 TAC §228.35 – Program Delivery and On-Going Support.

Recommendations:

- Develop a more specific policy for acceptance of military experiences.
- Ensure that complete records of field-based experiences are retained and are accessible for review.



2017 – 2018 Continuing Approval Review Report

- Continue to work with principals and site supervisors to ensure that all candidates experience a wide range of appropriate administrative experiences.

COMPONENT V: ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES AND EPP – 19 TAC §228.40

Findings

TEA reviewed the assessment and candidate evaluation practices of the EPP in accordance with 19 TAC §228.40, and found that:

- Benchmark information was provided through benchmark documents and degree plans. 19 TAC §228.40(a)
- Benchmark documents reflect tracking of requirements leading to examinations. 19 TAC §228.40(b)
- The EPP has a process for allowing a candidate to prepare and test in a different certification area for which the candidate is admitted. Candidates must go through the registrar's office, which involves changing their degree plan. 19 TAC §228.40(c)
- The EPP has a process for determining candidates' readiness to take certification examinations, which is published in the Candidate Handbook, Benchmark Guidelines, and Student Permission Slip for Testing. 19 TAC §228.40(d)
- The EPP uses internal and external assessments as sources of information to evaluate program design and delivery. They also partner with Junior Achievement for pre-clinical teaching field-based experience where students teach prescribed EC-6 social studies lessons and receive feedback from cooperating teachers. 19 TAC §228.40(e)

Based on evidence presented, St. Mary's University complies with 19 TAC §228.40 – Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates and EPP.

Recommendations: None

COMPONENT VI: PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT - 19 TAC §228.50

Findings

19 TAC §228.50 requires that during the period of preparation, the educator preparation program shall ensure that the individuals preparing candidates and the candidates themselves understand and adhere to Chapter 247 of this title (relating to Educators' Code of Ethics).



2017 – 2018 Continuing Approval Review Report

TEA reviewed the professional conduct practices of the EPP in accordance with 19 TAC §228.50, and found that:

- Each candidate signed a statement that they read, understood, and agree to the Texas Educator's Code of Ethics.
- EPP staff signed a statement that they read, understood, and agree to the Texas Educator's Code of Ethics. Signature documents were submitted for all staff.

Based on evidence presented, St. Mary's complies with 19 TAC §228.50 - Professional Conduct.

Recommendation:

- Stay abreast of changes to the Educators' Code of Ethics and update website and program materials accordingly.

COMPONENT VII: COMPLAINTS PROCESS – 19 TAC §228.70

Findings

TEA reviewed the complaints processes of the EPP in accordance with 19 TAC §228.70, and found that:

- St. Mary's University has its complaints process on file at TEA. 19 TAC §228.70(b)(1)
- The EPP complaint policy is posted on its website, along with a link to the TEA complaints website. 19 TAC §228.70(b)(2)
- The EPP complaint policy is posted on the physical site, as evidenced by a picture and description of the physical site posting. 19 TAC §228.70(b)(3)
- The EPP provided complaints information in the form of a candidate handbook. 19 TAC §228.70(b)(4)

Based on evidence presented, St. Mary's University complies with 19 TAC §228.70 – Complaints Process.

Recommendations: None

COMPONENT VIII: CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES - 19 TAC §228, §230, and §241.

Findings



2017 – 2018 Continuing Approval Review Report

TEA reviewed the certification procedures of the EPP in accordance with 19 TAC §228 and §228, and found that:

- Degree requirements were met and demonstrated with official transcripts. 19 TAC §230.13(a)(1)
- Candidates issued standard certificates completed the EPP as evidenced by degree plans, benchmark documents, and transcripts. 19 TAC §230.13(a)(2) and (b)(3)
- Candidates issued standard certificates passed the required exams. Candidates who had not attempted or passed the exams had a plan for remediation and documentation was provided of faculty attempts to assist struggling candidates. 19 TAC §230.13(a)(3) Principal candidates met requirements for degree, teaching certificate, prior teaching experience, and completion of the EPP. The EPP provided a document that tracks principal test pass rates for several years. 19 TAC §241.20

Based on evidence presented, St. Mary's University complies with 19 TAC §228, §230, and §241 – Certification Procedures.

Recommendations: None

COMPONENT IX: INTEGRITY OF DATA REPORTED - 19 TAC §229.3(f)(1)

Findings

TEA reviewed the certification procedures of the EPP in accordance with 19 TAC §229 and found that:

The EPP has reported the required data in an accurate and timely manner. 19 TAC §229.3(f)(1)

- During the 2016-2017 reporting period, the EPP did not provide accurate information in the first submission, but was able to resolve discrepancies in the second submission.

Based on evidence presented, St. Mary's University complies with 19 TAC §229 – Integrity of Data Reported.

Recommendations:

- Consider maintaining a centralized record-keeping system to facilitate reporting.

GENERAL PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Select an approved vendor for mental health, substance abuse, and youth suicide prevention training.



2017 – 2018 Continuing Approval Review Report

- Develop a more specific rubric and cut score for the admission interview and screening process.
- Refine policy for acceptance of military experiences, to include a rubric.
- Ensure that complete records of field-based experiences are retained and are accessible for review. Consider a centralized record-keeping system.
- Continue to work with principals and site supervisors to ensure that all principal candidates experience a wide range of appropriate administrative experiences.
- Stay abreast of changes to the Educators' Code of Ethics and update program materials as needed.
- Stay abreast of reporting timelines and expectations.

SUMMARY

St. Mary's University complies with the minimum requirements for all components of the review. For continuous improvement, they may wish to consider the TEA recommendations listed above.