

FAQ's About the Draft Revised Higher Education Accreditation Standards

The following are questions that were raised during the overview webinar on February 3.

Questions about the content of the standards

1. Where do the standards address expectations for providing student advising and other academic and non-academic supports to candidates?

In Standard C, programs will provide evidence of the academic and non-academic supports that they have in place to advance candidate success in the program. These might be supports that the program itself offers and/or are available within the larger institution and community.

2. Where is cultural competency addressed in the draft standards?

Cultural competency is addressed throughout the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*. The expectation in the draft accreditation standards, then, is that programs are developing candidates' cultural competency through the many learning opportunities and field experiences that are aligned to the *Professional Standards and Competencies*. In addition, the draft accreditation standards also ask programs to describe the candidate populations they serve and to provide evidence that faculty are prepared to effectively teach their candidates.

3. Do the standards set expectations for programs regarding their admissions policies and/or pass rates on licensure exam?

No, the draft standards do not set thresholds with regard to admissions criteria or pass rates on licensure exams. The accreditation system is open to ECE degree programs from the associate through initial master's degree levels. As such, many institutions in which the programs are housed have open admissions policies. Instead, in Standards A and C, programs are asked to describe the candidate population they serve and the supports they have in place to ensure their success. Within these areas of the standards, programs can describe any admissions requirements they might have in place. While the draft standards do not set a threshold on pass rates on licensure exams, Standard E does have a requirement that at least 80% of candidates are proficient in the *Professional Standards and Competencies*, as demonstrated through candidate performance on programs' key assessments.

4. How do the standards take into account the accessibility of programs to the ECE workforce? How do the standards address common barriers that prospective and current ECE students face in accessing higher education?

In Standard A, programs provide evidence that their mission and conceptual framework are responsive to their ECE community's workforce needs. In Standard C, programs are asked to provide evidence to demonstrate that they are facilitating candidate success through providing and connecting candidates to academic and non-academic supports. In addition, programs must provide evidence to demonstrate that they are contributing to building seamless postsecondary pathways through partnerships with high schools and other institutions. They can also provide evidence related to transfer and articulation policies which might include credit for prior learning, credit for CDA attainment, etc.

5. How do the standards address expectations around programs contributing to creating seamless postsecondary pathways?

In Standard C programs must provide evidence to demonstrate that they are contributing to building seamless postsecondary pathways through partnerships with high schools and other ECE degree programs located within their community¹. They can provide evidence related to transfer and articulation policies which might include credit for prior learning, credit for CDA attainment, etc. Programs can provide evidence about how they are streamlining requirements for entry into and completion of their programs and/or efforts they are making to align coursework across degree levels.

6. Where in the standards will programs describe how state policies, other standards, etc. inform their design?

Throughout each of the standards there are opportunities to describe institutional and/or state policies as well as other professional or state standards that inform the program's design. Programs are encouraged to be forthcoming about these areas and how they contribute to strengths and challenges of the program.

7. Do the draft standards require that students complete their student teaching/practica experience in a setting other than their employer's (if the student is already working in the ECE field)?

Standard F (Field Experiences) does not require that the final capstone field experience be completed outside a candidate's ECE employment setting. Instead, the draft standard requires programs to provide evidence that all candidates, over the course of the program, have field experiences with at least two of the three age groups (infant/toddler, preschoolers, and early grades) and in at least two of four early learning settings (home-based programs, center-based programs, early grade (K-3) settings, and comprehensive service settings (e.g., Head Start and Educare)). Field experiences are defined broadly as informal and formal opportunities for field observations, fieldwork, practica, student teaching and other clinical practice experiences such as home visiting. Thus, programs have a lot of flexibility in designing ways in which it can meet the expectations of Standard F.

8. Draft Standard F calls for field experiences to take place in sites that are consistent with the expectations of the *Professional Standards and Competencies*. It can be challenging to ensure that all sites meet this expectation. How do the draft standards address this?

The Commission recognizes that it can be challenging to identify and ensure that all field sites reflect practices that are consistent with the *Professional Standards and Competencies*. In responding to this

¹ "Community" is defined by the program.

standard, the Commission wants to understand how field sites are selected, including the criteria programs may use to identify potential sites. In cases where sites are not ideal, the program would then provide evidence of how it supplements those field experiences to ensure that candidates have access to quality practices.

9. Under the current accreditation standards, programs submit 5-6 key assessments to demonstrate alignment to the standards. Will there be an option to submit a 7th key assessment under the new standards?

The draft accreditation standards require programs to submit 6 key assessments. The Commission will make a decision about the final number of required key assessments after reviewing the feedback collected during the public comment period.

10. How do the draft standards ensure that early childhood education programs include sufficient content focused on children 0-3?

The draft accreditation standards ask programs to provide evidence that they are developing and assuring candidates' proficiency in the *Professional Standards and Competencies for Early Childhood Educators*. These latter standards articulate expectations for early childhood educators' knowledge, skills and dispositions in order to effectively support young children's (birth through age 8) development and learning. Thus, as part of meeting accreditation expectations, programs will have to provide evidence of candidates' learning opportunities in relation to working with children 0-3. In addition, Standard F (Field Experiences) of the draft accreditation standards requires programs to provide field experience opportunities with at least two of three age groups (infants/toddlers, preschool, and early primary grades).

Questions about the implementing the standards

11. When will the final standards be released?

The Commission anticipates releasing the final standards in mid-2021.

12. What is the timeline for programs in the accreditation system to implement the new standards?

When the final standards are released they will be accompanied by a timeline for implementation for programs preparing for first-time and renewal accreditation, for programs responding to conditions, and for programs recently accredited (no conditions). Please be assured that there will be ample time for programs to make the transition to the new standards. While the implementation plan has yet to be finalized, there will be at least a one-year period after the new standards are released during which programs submitting first-time/renewal Self-Study can choose between using the current or new accreditation standards. See Question #14 for more information.

13. What resources will be provided to support programs' transition to the new standards when they are released?

The accreditation system will offer webinars, in-person trainings (when the pandemic ends) and written guidance to support programs' transition to the new standards. Staff will be available to meet with programs individually to answer any questions they might have.

14. What are you telling programs in the accreditation system that are eager to start (or have already started) aligning their curriculum to the *Professional Standards and Competencies*?

The *Professional Standards and Competencies* represent the ECE profession's current expectations for the knowledge, skills and dispositions that early childhood educators need to master in order to be effective practitioners. Thus, it is important for programs to begin making shifts to align their curriculum to these expectations. **With regard to the current accreditation standards and system, though, there are some important caveats and considerations:**

- Programs that are currently on conditions that relate to concerns about the alignment of the key assessments to the *2010 Professional Preparation Standards* and/or concerns about rubric quality should continue to use the *2010 Professional Preparation Standards* when responding to conditions. New or revised key assessments submitted in the response to conditions may reference the *Professional Standards and Competencies* (if the program has begun making the shift) but the labeling of key elements should very clearly identify where the *2010 Professional Preparation Standards* are addressed as this is what the Commission will consider when determining whether the program meets the condition(s).
- Programs submitting Self-Study Reports in March 2021 should use the *2010 Professional Preparation Standards* (and current Self-Study Report templates found in the online Accreditation Resource Library). Key assessments submitted in the response to conditions may reference the *Professional Standards and Competencies* (if the program has begun making the shift), but the labeling of key elements should very clearly identify where the *2010 Professional Preparation Standards* are addressed as this is what the Commission will consider when making the accreditation decision.
- Programs that are planning to submit first-time/renewal Self-Study Reports in 2023 and beyond should anticipate submitting Self-Study Reports under the new accreditation standards in which curriculum alignment to the *Professional Standards and Competencies* is required.
- If your program has begun shifting to the *Professional Standards and Competencies* and plans to submit a first-time/renewal Self-Study Report in September 2021, March 2022 or September 2022 please be in touch with NAEYC (highered@naeyc.org) so that we can learn more about your efforts and identify areas the Commission may need to consider.

The Commission will include comprehensive guidance related to this question when it releases the final standards later this year. We strongly encourage programs to be in touch with NAEYC at highered@naeyc.org with specific questions related to this topic.

Other questions

15. What are the different ways we can provide feedback on the draft accreditation standards?

We are offering office hours on February 9, 11-12:00 EST and February 17, 2:00-3:00 EST where individuals can offer feedback on and ask questions about the draft standards. [Click here](#) to register for office hours. We also strongly encourage individuals to complete the feedback survey. Within this, respondents have the option to offer general feedback on the standards and/or provide feedback on each standard. [Click here](#) to access the survey.

16. Why is NAEYC seeking recognition from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)?

CHEA is the accreditor of higher education accreditation bodies. All regional higher education accreditation bodies and many programmatic accreditors are recognized by CHEA. CHEA recognition provides external validation of the quality of an accreditation body.

17. Will the standards be weighted differently? Will all of the indicators that comprise each standard factor into the accreditation decision?

Over the spring, the Commission will deliberate on if and how the draft standards will be weighted in the accreditation decision and whether all indicators will factor into the accreditation decision. The feedback gathered during the public comment period will inform these deliberations.

18. Are student advisors interviewed during the accreditation site visit?

Yes, often peer review teams have an opportunity to talk with student advisors, library personnel and others on campus who contribute resources and expertise to support ECE candidates and ECE degree programs.

19. When will programmatic accreditation of all ECE professional preparation programs be required?

The *Unifying Framework for the Early Childhood Education Profession* calls for all professional preparation programs to be accredited. It also recognizes, though, that many supports need to be in place in order to achieve this vision – such as buy-in from higher education leaders, reliable and sustainable funding sources for ECE higher education programs, and state policies that embed professional accreditation as part of the ECE professional preparation system.

20. Will the NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs be partnering with other accrediting bodies (e.g., AAQEP, CAEP) or organizations (e.g. DEC) to jointly review programs?

Currently there is not a process in place to jointly review programs with other organizations or accrediting bodies. Conversations continue with some of these organizations to identify ways we can collaborate to support programs that participate in multiple accreditation systems and/or are preparing early childhood educators for dual licensure. For programs housed in Educator Preparation Programs that are CAEP-accredited - Should the accreditation system achieve CHEA recognition (see Question #16) CAEP will then recognize a NAEYC accredited program as meeting CAEP requirements for program review.

21. Does the accreditation system include advanced programs?

No. At this time the accreditation system accredits initial preparation programs – those preparing early childhood educators for beginning career roles and/or first ECE teaching licenses. We are excited about the interest of advanced programs to be part of the accreditation system and will continue to explore ways we can expand.