



Initial Accreditation by AAQEP

Initial accreditation is a status awarded by accrediting agencies that recognizes, based on review of evidence of program capacity and effectiveness, that an institution or program meets fundamental quality requirements. The U.S. Department of Education allows institutions that have achieved initial accreditation status with institutional accreditors to participate in Title IV student financial aid programs, and many state education agencies (SEAs) allow professional preparation and other programs that have achieved initial accreditation status with national programmatic accreditors to meet state authorization requirements.

Specialized and programmatic accrediting agencies offer reviews leading to initial accreditation to expedite and scaffold the recognition process for professional preparation programs. Initial review processes are useful for newly launched programs and for programs seeking accreditation under standards that are new to them, including those seeking national accreditation for the first time and those moving from one national accreditor to another. Initial accreditation is conferred for a specified nonrenewable term; annual reports are required of initially accredited programs for monitoring and accountability purposes.

The AAQEP Initial Accreditation Pathway

AAQEP's initial accreditation pathway is an option designed to support both new educator preparation providers and providers that are new to the AAQEP accreditation standards.

Eligibility: All programs included in an AAQEP initial accreditation review must hold approval from the relevant SEA (or other program authorizer as appropriate, hereafter SEA), unless such authorization and initial accreditation are being sought simultaneously, in which case both reviews must reach an affirmative conclusion in order for initial accreditation to be awarded. The provider seeking initial accreditation status also must be a regular member of AAQEP at the time of submission of the self-study report.

Self-Study: A provider seeking initial accreditation status conducts a self-study of its educator preparation programs based on the AAQEP expectations framework detailed in the *Guide to AAQEP Accreditation*. As the culmination of its self-study, the provider submits an Initial Accreditation Report (IAR) to AAQEP. The IAR consists of five narrative sections and two required appendices:

1. Introduction and Overview of the Provider's Programs and the Study
2. Standard 1: Set of Projected Measures With Plan for Data and Analysis
3. Standard 2: Set of Projected Measures With Plan for Data and Analysis

4. Documentation of Mutually Beneficial P-12 Partnerships
5. Contextual Challenges, Planned Changes, and Conclusion
6. Program Capacity and Institutional Commitment (Quality Assurance Report Appendix C)
7. Evidence of Data Quality (Quality Assurance Report Appendix E)

Review Process: An initial accreditation review is conducted entirely online by trained peer reviewers. The review team reads the provider's IAR, holds a virtual previsit meeting with program faculty and staff, conducts a virtual site visit including interviews with relevant stakeholders, and produces a review report that is shared with the provider for factual correction. An agreed final version of the report is forwarded to a panel of AAQEP Accreditation Commissioners, who review both the IAR and the team report. The commissioners then hold a virtual accreditation decision meeting, which both the provider and SEA representatives are invited to attend. In addition to rendering a decision regarding initial accreditation status, commissioners provide feedback and recommendations to inform the provider's improvement and innovation processes.

Public Posting: Following the decision meeting, AAQEP posts the provider's accreditation status and the Accreditation Action Report within 30 days on its website. AAQEP also sends official notice to both the provider and the SEA.

Term and Maintenance of Accreditation: AAQEP's initial accreditation status carries a maximum term of 5 years; because accreditation is conditioned on SEA approval, shorter terms for initial accreditation may apply in specific state contexts. A provider maintains initial accreditation status by keeping in good standing as an AAQEP member and completing all sections of the AAQEP Annual Report as required between October 1 and December 31 each year.

Initial accreditation status is nonrenewable. To be continuously accredited, providers holding initial status must complete a Quality Assurance Report and receive an affirmative accreditation decision prior to the expiration of their initial accreditation. Additional timeline requirements may apply in some states or jurisdictions.

Coordination With State Authorizers: AAQEP's standards require accredited providers to meet all state approval requirements. Accreditation activities may be scheduled to coincide with state reviews in keeping with any memorandum of agreement currently in effect between AAQEP and the SEA.

Timeline

The following general timeline applies to the AAQEP initial accreditation pathway:

- IAR received by AAQEP
- Within 6-9 months: Virtual site visit
- Within 2-4 months of the site visit: Accreditation Commission decision meeting
- Up to 5 years from end of site visit semester: Term for initial accreditation status