[Nebraska Department of Education]—
AAQEP COOPERATION AGREEMENT

between
the [Nebraska Department of Education]
and
the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation
For the time period from: July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022

This agreement establishes a framework for cooperation between the [Nebraska Department of Education (SEA)] and the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) with regard to quality assurance activities in support of educator preparation in the State of Nebraska. The purpose of this agreement is to support quality assurance, continuous improvement, and innovation in educator preparation by entities approved by [Nebraska Department of Education Authority] as they seek and maintain national accreditation through AAQEP.

AAQEP affirms [Nebraska Department of Education]'s efforts to ensure quality preparation of educators to meet the needs of [Nebraska's] children, families, schools, and communities and commits to ensuring quality educator preparation by providers approved by [Nebraska Department of Education]. By entering this agreement, [Nebraska Department of Education] affirms AAQEP's mission of promoting and recognizing quality educator preparation that strengthens the education profession's ability to serve all students, schools, and communities.

1. Standards Used in Quality Assurance Reviews in [Nebraska]
   Quality Assurance Reviews conducted by AAQEP in [Nebraska] will be guided by the current version of the AAQEP standards (available at www.aaqep.org) and in keeping with AAQEP policy regarding the application of those standards. In conducting reviews of programs approved by [Nebraska Department of Education] AAQEP will require that all relevant [Nebraska] standards and Rules and/or Regulations be addressed.

   In addition, providers are welcome to orient their Quality Assurance Review to other relevant professional standards (for example, those from professional associations such as the National Council for Social Studies [NCSS], the International Literacy Association [ILA], the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics [NCTM], etc.).

2. Scope of Quality Assurance Reviews in [Nebraska]
The scope of the AAQEP accreditation sought by providers in [Nebraska] will be determined by the provider in consultation with AAQEP. The provider will clearly identify which aspects of its work are and are not accredited in all public displays that make note of accreditation.
3. **Quality Assurance Review Process**
All Quality Assurance Reviews conducted by AAQEP will be guided by AAQEP's policies and procedures as specified in the Guide to Accreditation, available at www.aaqep.org. AAQEP's process includes an optional proposal review stage two to three years prior to a scheduled site visit. All Quality Assurance Reviews include an off-site review two months prior to each site visit, conducted virtually, which Nebraska Department of Education staff are welcome to attend, and an on-site visit the scope of which is determined by program size and complexity.

4. **Quality Assurance Review Team Composition**
[For AAQEP-only reviews] AAQEP will appoint a sufficient number of Quality Assurance Review Team members to each review case to ensure that the review is carried out thoroughly and efficiently. Each AAQEP review team will include at least one educational practitioner from Nebraska nominated by the provider hosting the review; that practitioner will receive training and support from AAQEP. The local practitioner(s) will support the review team’s understanding of and respect for the local and state educational context.
In addition to the AAQEP-appointed members, one or more Nebraska Department of Education staff member(s) may participate as observers. Other observers, including those seeking a better understanding of the AAQEP process, may participate as agreed to by AAQEP and the host provider.

5. **Reviewer Preparation and Qualifications**
All review team members will meet AAQEP preparation and quality requirements. Reviewer training and professional learning opportunities will be made available to Nebraska Department of Education staff at no cost (though AAQEP will not cover travel expenses); Nebraska Department of Education observers need not have participated in the training as a condition for joining review teams as observers.

6. **Relation of Accreditation to Program Approval**
The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has sole responsibility for program approval. The state program review shall be conducted by a state team, appointed by the Commissioner, which includes representation from the Nebraska Council on Teacher Education (NCTE), persons with content knowledge in the endorsement areas offered by the teacher education program, and Department staff. For institutions participating in a national accreditation review of education preparation programs, the state program review shall be conducted to coordinate with the national accreditation process.

NDE may utilize information generated from the AAQEP program review process to make decisions regarding Nebraska program approval. As evidence of quality, AAQEP accepts the decisions of national accrediting organizations for specialized professional program areas that are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). Proper documentation of current
accreditation must be presented by the EPP. For purposes of state program approval, NDE recognizes the following program review option:

1. State review by NDE: NDE conducts program reviews for purposes of state approval and to inform AAQEP accreditation. NDE provides forms and instructions on how to meet all state standards for licensure/certificate program approval. Upon completion of the NDE forms, trained reviewers are selected and assigned within appropriate content areas. Reviewers make recommendations for further action and/or approval/ The Nebraska State Board of Education makes the final decision on approval of all programs.

7. Accreditation Decisions
AAQEP accreditation decisions are made by the AAQEP Accreditation Commission. Accreditation statuses and terms are detailed in AAQEP’s Guide and policy documents, available at www.aaqep.org. Full accreditation is for a term of 7 years. Observers from The Nebraska Department of Education are welcome to attend meetings of the Accreditation Commission at which cases of Nebraska providers are considered (meetings are typically conducted via video conference). Accreditation decisions, including the reports on which decisions are based and the Accreditation Commission’s rationale for each decision, will be shared with the designated office at The Nebraska Department of Education, which for purposes of this agreement is via email.

8. Communication and Logistics of Collaboration
Providers seeking AAQEP accreditation will ensure that The Nebraska Department of Education is apprised of the schedule of accreditation activities, particularly of target site visit dates; providers will also send electronically a final copy of or links to the final version of their Quality Assurance Report (the self-study) to SEA at the same time they provide it to AAQEP.

AAQEP will communicate scheduled times of its on-site reviews with The Nebraska Department of Education staff six to twelve months prior to the event taking place. Where joint or concurrent visits are desired, AAQEP staff will coordinate logistics with designated SEA staff and the provider. AAQEP will also apprise designated The Nebraska Department of Education staff of the schedule of Accreditation Commission meetings at which cases from Nebraska providers will be considered. In addition, AAQEP will provide designated SEA staff with copies of all reports or official letters for Nebraska providers generated by the review team and by the Accreditation Commission.

9. AAQEP Capacity Review and Formative Support Options
AAQEP will make available to Nebraska providers, in cooperation with and at the discretion of The Nebraska Department of Education, two additional services:

- At The Nebraska Department of Education’s request, AAQEP will conduct capacity reviews of entities seeking first-time approval as an educator
preparation provider. Such reviews will be conducted prior to the operation of the program to provide The Nebraska Department of Education with a third-party review to inform a program approval decision. Such reviews will be designed and conducted in partnership with The Nebraska Department of Education using the AAQEP standards as the framework.

- AAQEP also facilitates program and provider improvement for entities that have identified specific shortcomings in their work, including cases where shortcomings have been identified through external evaluations such as state or accreditation reviews. AAQEP will enter into an agreement with the provider and The Nebraska Department of Education to establish a timeline, priorities, and outcomes for such reviews.

10. Membership
AAQEP views cooperation among accreditors, educator preparation providers, and SEAs as essential to effective quality assurance. It enters into this agreement with the intent of supporting both The Nebraska Department of Education and providers authorized by it in ensuring the preparation of excellent and effective teachers and other professional educators. The Nebraska Department of Education agrees to join AAQEP as a state member at no cost in support of these goals.

In support of shared goals, AAQEP will provide supportive services including workshops and webinars to providers in Nebraska at reasonable cost. The Nebraska Department of Education staff may participate in any AAQEP activities offered within Nebraska at no cost (AAQEP cannot cover travel expenses, meals, or lodging). AAQEP will also provide one The Nebraska Department of Education staff member with a no-cost registration to its Annual Quality Assurance Symposium and provide any additional The Nebraska Department of Education staff registration at the reduced member rate. In addition, The Nebraska Department of Education staff may participate in AAQEP professional learning events, including reviewer training, at no cost (travel, etc., excepted, as above).

Mar 29, 2021
Mark LaCelle-Peterson
CEO and President,
AAQEP

3.24.2021
Kelly Heineke, Director
Educator Preparation Program Approval
The Nebraska Department of Education