AAQEP - SEA COOPERATION AGREEMENT

between the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation
and
the New Jersey Department of Education
September 1, 2022

This agreement establishes a framework for cooperation between the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation (AAQEP) [P.O. Box 7511; Fairfax, VA 22039] and the New Jersey Department of Education (Department) [P.O. Box 500; Trenton, NJ 08625-0500] with regard to quality assurance activities in support of educator preparation in the State of New Jersey. The purpose of this agreement is to support quality assurance, continuous improvement, and innovation in educator preparation by entities approved by the Department as they seek and maintain accreditation through AAQEP.

The terms of this agreement shall begin on September 1, 2022, of the last signature below and end on June 30 of 2027.

AAQEP affirms the Department’s efforts to ensure quality preparation of educators to meet the needs of New Jersey’s children, families, schools, and communities and commits to ensuring quality educator preparation by providers approved by the Department. By entering this agreement, the Department 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
   Quality Assurance Reviews conducted by AAQEP in New Jersey will be guided by the current version of the AAQEP standards available at https://aaqep.org, and in keeping with AAQEP policy regarding the application of those standards. In conducting reviews of programs approved by the Department, AAQEP will require that all relevant New Jersey goals, standards, and Commissioner’s Regulations as identified by the Department 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
   The scope of AAQEP accreditation sought by providers in New Jersey must include all programs approved by the Department that require continuous accreditation (N.J.A.C. 6A:9A-3.1). In addition to programs specified by the Department, the provider may, at its discretion, choose to include additional programs of study to a degree or credential designed for those intending to work as, or already working as educational professionals.
For such programs of study, where no state standards are specified, the provider shall identify any standards in addition to the AAQEP standards to which its program(s) is (are) aligned.

The scope of the AAQEP accreditation sought by providers in New Jersey will be determined by the provider in consultation with AAQEP and, when appropriate, the Department. The provider will identify which aspects of its work are and are not accredited in all public displays that make note of accreditation. AAQEP should be notified when an additional program(s) is (are) approved by the state during the accreditation cycle through the AAQEP Annual Report or the substantive change notification form.

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 https://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 a virtual off-site review two months prior to each site visit and an on-site visit, both the Department staff will attend. The number of teams and team members are determined by the provider size and complexity of the programs. The provider will work in collaboration with the Department and AAQEP to schedule the off-site and on-site visits.

4. Quality Assurance Review Team Composition
   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 New Jersey 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 Department staff member(s) will participate as observers. Other observers, including those seeking a better understanding of the AAQEP process, may participate as agreed to by AAQEP and the hosting 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 Department staff at no cost except travel expenses, as they are not covered by AAQEP; Department observers are invited to participate in training prior to joining review teams as observers. Training is not a condition for participation as observers.

6. Relation of Accreditation to Program Approval
   All decisions for state approval of education preparation programs for each content or specialty area are within the sole authority of the Department. Determining program compliance with New Jersey regulations is done independently of AAQEP; however, accreditation is required for continued state program approval. AAQEP acknowledges that
the rules and standards that govern state approval of a provider and its programs in New Jersey are subject to change at any time by the Department.

AAQEP’s process requires disaggregation of evidence by licensure, certificate, or endorsement area, as well as by program site and/or mode of delivery. This allows for quality judgments to be made regarding each licensure, certificate, or endorsement area program under the scope of accreditation. Quality assurance at the program level provides evidence for how AAQEP standards on candidate and completer performance are being met and facilitate comprehensive judgment of the provider as a whole. AAQEP adheres to the federal and state data disclosure policies and has disclosure avoidance policies in place.

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 https://aaqep.org. Full accreditation is for a term of 7 years. Observers from the Department are welcome to attend meetings of the Accreditation Commission at which cases of New Jersey 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 Department.

8. Communication and Logistics of Collaboration
Providers seeking AAQEP accreditation will ensure that the Department is apprised of the schedule of accreditation activities, including scheduled site visit dates. Providers will also send a copy of the final version of their Quality Assurance Report (the self-study) electronically to the Department at the same time they provide it to AAQEP in PDF format. AAQEP will inform the Department of the Accreditation Commission meeting(s) at which a Provider’s case will be considered.

AAQEP will provide the Department with a copy of the Quality Review Team Report and Accreditation Commission Action Letter in PDF format when they become available as well as, annually, a list of EPPs affiliated with AAQEP and their current status and a list of EPPs who have a formal agreement with AAQEP but have yet received full accreditation.

9. AAQEP Capacity Review and Formative Support Options
AAQEP will make available to New Jersey providers at the provider’s expense, in cooperation with and at the discretion of the Department, two additional services:

- At the Department or EPP’s request, AAQEP will conduct capacity reviews of educator preparation programs that are seeking first-time approval as an educator preparation provider in the State of New Jersey. Such reviews will be designed and conducted in partnership with the Department using the AAQEP standards as the framework.

Any entities new to New Jersey participating in such a capacity review will join AAQEP as a regular member and engage in activities outlined in the AAQEP Preoperational Recognition Policy. The entity must pay the AAQEP regular membership dues and 50% of
site visit fees when securing a site visit date and the full site visit fee will need to be paid prior to the review taking place.

- 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 Department to establish a timeline, priorities, and outcomes for such reviews.

10. Membership
AAQEP views cooperation among accreditors, educator preparation providers, and State Education Agencies as essential to effective quality assurance. It enters into this agreement with the intent of supporting both the Department and providers authorized by it in ensuring the preparation of excellent and effective teachers and other professional educators. The Department 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 New Jersey at a reasonable cost. The Department staff may participate in any AAQEP activities virtually or in New Jersey at no cost (AAQEP cannot cover travel expenses, meals, or lodging). AAQEP will also provide one Department staff member with a no-cost registration to its annual Quality Assurance Symposium and provide any additional Department staff registration at the reduced member rate. In addition, Department staff may participate in AAQEP professional learning events, including reviewer training, at no cost (travel, etc., excepted, as above).

Signatures:

Mark LaCelle-Peterson, CEO and President, AAQEP
January 10, 2022
Date

Angelica Allen McMillan, Commissioner of Education
New Jersey Department of Education
October 4, 2022
Date