

North Carolina - AAQEP COOPERATION AGREEMENT

between the

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the North Carolina State Board of Education, and the Association for Advancing Quality in Educator Preparation

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

AAQEP affirms North Carolina's efforts to ensure quality preparation of educators to meet the needs of North Carolina's children, families, schools, and communities. Further, AAQEP commits to ensuring quality educator preparation by providers approved by the NCSBE. By entering this agreement, NCSBE and NCDPI affirm 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 North Carolina

Quality Assurance Reviews conducted by AAQEP in North Carolina will be guided by the current version of the AAQEP standards (available at www.aaqep.org) and AAQEP policy regarding the application of those standards. In conducting reviews of programs approved by NCSBE, AAQEP will require that all relevant NCSBE policies and state and federal law be addressed.

2. Scope of Quality Assurance Reviews in North Carolina

AAQEP quality assurance reviews require the provider/EPP (EPP) to prepare a Quality Assurance Report, that an AAQEP Quality Assurance Review Team will use to guide the accreditation review process. The Quality Assurance Report created by the EPP is a robust self-study documenting the EPP's evidence that it meets the AAQEP standards. The report includes an overview of programs' scope and context, evidence to support the claim that they meet each of the four standards, and designated appendices. A Quality Assurance Review Team (QRT) is a group consisting of AAQEP-trained quality assurance reviewers who conduct the quality assurance review. Teams include reviewers who fill the role of a team lead and a local practitioner nominated by the EPP. The size of the QRT is based on the size and complexity of the program(s) under review. A typical team consists of 3-5 individuals.

The scope of the AAQEP accreditation sought by providers in North Carolina will be determined by the EPP in consultation with AAQEP. The EPP will clearly identify which aspects of its work are and are not accredited in all public displays that make note of accreditation.

The scope of AAQEP accreditation sought by EPPs in North Carolina must include all programs registered with or recognized by the NCSBE and NCDPI as specified in North Carolina State Board of Education (SBE) Policy and North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) legislation. In addition, EPPs may, at its discretion, choose to include additional

programs of study that lead to a degree or certificate designed for those intending to work as, or already working as, educational professionals.

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) and an on-site visit the scope of which is determined by program size and complexity.

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 North Carolina nominated by the EPP 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 NCDPI staff member(s) may participate in the quality assurance review process as observers. Neither AAQEP nor the EPP are responsible for any costs incurred, if applicable, to one or more NCDPI staff member(s) who may choose to participate as an observer. 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 NCDPI staff at no cost (though AAQEP will not cover travel expenses); NCDPI observers need not have participated in the training as a condition for joining review teams as observers.

6. Relation of Accreditation to Program Approval

AAQEP review teams will confirm with NCDPI to ensure that the EPP/provider is current as an approved NCSBE EPP.

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 NCDPI are welcome to attend meetings of the Accreditation Commission at which cases of North Carolina 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/person(s) at NCDPI overseeing Educator Preparation, Educator Preparation Accreditation, and the NCDPI Superintendent, via email.

8. Communication and Logistics of Collaboration

EPPs seeking AAQEP accreditation will ensure that NCDPI is apprised of the schedule of accreditation activities, particularly of target site visit dates.; EPPs will also send

electronically a final copy of or links to the final version of their Quality Assurance Report (the self-study) to NCDPI at the same time they provide it to AAQEP.

AAQEP will communicate scheduled times of its off-site and on-site reviews with the designated NCPDI staff liaison as specified in the agreement. In addition, AAQEP will provide designated NCDPI staff with copies of all reports or official letters for North Carolina EPPs generated by the review team and by the Accreditation Commission.

9. AAQEP Capacity Review and Formative Support Options

AAQEP will make available to North Carolina providers that are regular AAQEP members, in cooperation with and at the discretion of NCDPI, two additional services:


- At NCDPI'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 NCDPI with a third-party review to inform a program approval decision. Such reviews will be designed and conducted in partnership with NCDPI 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 coordinate with the EPP to establish a timeline, priorities, and outcomes for such reviews, and inform NCDPI

10. Membership

AAQEP views cooperation among accreditors, EPPs, and state education agencies as essential to effective quality assurance and continual improvement. It enters into this agreement with the intent of supporting NCSBE, NCDPI, and the EPPs authorized by it in ensuring the preparation of excellent and effective teachers and other professional educators. North Carolina 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 North Carolina at reasonable cost. NCDPI staff may participate in any AAQEP activities offered within North Carolina at no cost (AAQEP cannot cover travel expenses, meals, or lodging). AAQEP will also provide one NCDPI staff member with a no-cost registration to its Annual Quality Assurance Symposium and provide any additional NCDPI staff registration at the reduced member rate. In addition, NCDPI staff may participate in AAQEP professional learning events, including reviewer training, at no cost (travel, etc., excepted, as above).

This memorandum of agreement is effective for 5-years from the date of signatures. It will be revisited at the term of the agreement, or earlier, if desired by either party. Either party may terminate this agreement with at least sixty (60) days prior written notice to the other party.

					
<i>Mark LaCelle-Peterson</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Eric Davis</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Mark Johnson</i>	<i>Date</i>
CEO and President		Board Chair		Superintendent	
Association for Advancing		North Carolina State Board		North Carolina Department	
Quality in Educator Preparation		of Education		of Public Instruction	