

## **CEC Accreditation Background and Requirements**

In 2020, the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) began work to become an independent accreditor of special educator programs. The purpose of CEC Accreditation is to build upon CEC's history of National Recognition as a SPA (Specialized Professional Association) and to create an accreditation process that is a robust, targeted approach focused on developing candidate proficiencies, candidate performance on CEC standards, public accountability, and contextual indicators of quality in alignment to the existing CEC Professional Preparation Standards. The Accreditation process is being developed with consideration of cost efficiency for programs by conducting operations virtually, with volunteers (peer reviewers, accreditation commissioners) virtual site visits, and virtual trainings to make accreditation more accessible regardless of program budgets.

High quality preparation is essential to ensuring positive outcomes for students who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. CEC Accreditation will provide an opportunity for special educator preparation programs to independently seek national accreditation directly from the recognized leader in special education.

CEC formed an Accreditation Commission tasked with developing the accreditation process, procedures, and requirements. In November 2020, the CEC Board of Directors executed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commission, providing the Commission operational independence with respect to accreditation policy, process, and decision-making.

The CEC Commission is designing an accreditation process for initial preparation programs that prepare candidates for their first credential in special education and advanced special educator programs that prepare candidates for subsequent credentials. Special educator preparation programs operating within the United States and its territories and within U.S. based institutions operating abroad are eligible for national accreditation by CEC.

CEC Accreditation requirements include provision of an integrated sequence of coursework leading to a degree and/or credential (e.g., state licensure) that entitles the holder to perform professional special educator services. CEC Accreditation will launch using the following sets of standards:

- 2020 Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Special Educators

- 2020 Initial Practice-Based Professional Preparation Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators
- 2012 Advanced Special Education Preparation Standards

The CEC Commission may choose to include additional sets of professional preparation standards in the accreditation process in the future. Such additions would include a public review period.

The Commission has developed the following draft of expectations for programs seeking CEC Accreditation. The Commission has identified the foundational elements underlying high quality educator preparation programs, and as such these expectations form the basis of requisite program evidence to achieve CEC Accreditation. The expectations are consistent with and build upon requirements for existing CEC National Program Recognition processes.

### **Expectation 1: Developing Candidate Proficiencies stated in relevant set of CEC Standards**

Expectation 1 focuses on the program's design and ability to develop candidate proficiencies through a foundation of coursework, program of study, and field and clinical experiences.

Sample evidence for this expectation could be a course catalog, syllabi, and other documents that outline requirements for program completion.

### **Expectation 2: Measuring Candidate Performance on *CEC Standards*\* and Using Data for Continuous Improvement**

Expectation 2 is focused on how a program meets the CEC Standards that are relevant to their program. Programs will minimally submit six to eight key assessments as evidence of meeting the CEC standards. A key assessment is defined as an assessment that all candidates will be required to take for program completion.

Sample evidence for meeting Expectation 2 will be in alignment with resources currently posted for meeting CEC standards through CEC's National Recognition Process.

### **Expectation 3: Assuring Public Accountability**

Expectation 3 requires programs to publicly post performance data and to provide evidence that the program demonstrates ongoing attention to innovation and improvement.

Sample evidence for Expectation 3 could include demonstration of effective performance in relation to candidate learning (e.g., completion, graduation, retention, success with academic transfer, success with entry into graduate school).

#### **Expectation 4: Contextual Indicators of Quality Required for the Self-Study Report**

Expectation 4 provides the opportunity for programs seeking accreditation to provide contextual information to inform the accreditation evaluation process. Submission opportunities for this Expectation encompasses three categories: Mission and Conceptual Framework, Leadership and Faculty, and Resources and Student Support.

#### **Next Steps/Timeline(s)**

The CEC Accreditation Commission will collect and consider all public feedback received regarding the expectations for potential edits and modifications. The Commission plans to seek additional public feedback at regular intervals as elements of the accreditation process are developed.

The commission will revise and release a final version of the Accreditation Expectations early summer 2021 and will begin developing additional rubrics and program and reviewer resources. CEC's plans to host informational webinars and begin accepting applications to enter the accreditation process in late summer/early fall 2021.

CEC also will seek recognition from the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) once it begins accreditation operations.

#### **Invitation for Public Comment**

The CEC Accreditation Commission invites stakeholders to review the draft Accreditation Expectations and to provide feedback and comments via the survey link below. A list of frequently asked questions will be extracted from the survey results and posted with responses from CEC Staff and the Accreditation Commission on CEC's website.