

Guidelines for Massachusetts Early Educator Preparation Programs Participating in the Early Childhood Educator Scholarships Program

Background

The Departments of Higher Education and Early Education and Care, in consultation with early childhood and child development professionals and academicians, developed quality assurance guidelines for early childhood programs enrolling students in Massachusetts Early Educator Preparation programs. The guidelines, which include both quality standards and the program review process, can be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure continued effectiveness and quality.

The Guidelines were informed by several underlying principles:

- *To be successful, a quality assurance program requires the commitment of both the Commonwealth and each institution providing an Early Educator preparation program.*
- *The review process should be comparable to other review processes used by the state and professional and regional accrediting bodies.*
- *There should be high, not minimum, clearly specified standards of quality for Early Educator Preparation programs.*
- *The review process must be clearly presented to institutions and reviewers.*

Part I of the Guidelines lists the standards of quality and suggested indicators.

Part II describes the Review Process.

Part I: Quality Standards for Associate and Bachelor's Early Educator Preparation Programs

Throughout the standards, 'program' refers to early childhood, child development family studies, child care administration or fields appropriate to early child development degree programs. Following each standard is a list of Indicators for how an institution may demonstrate that it meets the standard. Indicators are not limited to those listed in this document.

A. Program Mission and Purposes

A.1 The program has a stated mission and set of purposes derived from and consistent with the overall mission and purposes of the institution of higher education.

Indicators:

- Statement of program mission and purposes
- Statement reflects institution's mission and purposes

B. Program Structure and Curriculum

B.1 The program clearly specifies and publishes program objectives and requirements. Requirements for the program are based upon clearly defined and articulated learning objectives, including a mastery of the knowledge, methods of inquiry, and intellectual skills pertinent to the study of early childhood, child development, family studies, child care administration or fields appropriate to early child development and its interrelatedness to other areas of inquiry.

B.2 The program design is characterized by sufficient content, breadth, depth, coherence, and rigor appropriate to its higher education level. Individual courses and programs are dynamic and responsive to new developments in the field and modes of inquiry.

B.3 The program and courses provide an opportunity for reflection and for analysis of the subject matter. Programs and courses offered on other than the usual semester/quarter hour basis or through distance learning modalities (internet, television, video-conferencing, or other means) or through different divisions of the institution (e.g., day division, evening division, continuing education division) demonstrate that students completing these programs or courses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies comparable to those expected in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods and modalities.

B.4 Core Competency areas and Specialization topics are evident in coursework. The methods of evaluation of student performance are appropriate and consistent with established institutional and academic standards and are comparable to other programs throughout the institution.

Indicators for Standard B: Program Structure and Curriculum

- Statement of program goals and objectives, including those for concentrations and options
- Indication that the institution's mission and purposes are reflected in the specific educational objectives of the program
- Explanation of rationale behind sequencing of courses
- Expected learning outcomes for each course
- Demonstration that students' mastery of the program's stated learning outcomes are assessed prior to completion of the program
- Comparison of grade point average of Early Educator students with the average grade point average college-wide

Undergraduate Degree Programs

All undergraduate programs in early childhood, child development family studies, child care administration or fields appropriate to early child development are part of a broadly-based degree program with a balance of general education, required and elective courses in early childhood and unrestricted electives wherever possible. While these criteria apply to all undergraduate programs, specific expectations for associate and bachelor's degree programs

reflect program degree level. Distinctions made in such expectations may concern such matters as the level, scope, and dimension of degree requirements and expected outcomes.

B.5 The purpose of undergraduate programs is to educate students to be critical thinkers who can communicate their thoughts effectively in oral and written form, as well as to instill a comprehensive knowledge of the professional standards and code of ethics of the early childhood profession. NAEYC Standards and Code of Ethics serve as the guide for the design, evaluation, and implementation of professional preparation and development programs.

Programs should strive not only to familiarize students with theoretical content knowledge and concepts but, equally important, emphasize pedagogical knowledge students will need to develop the capacity for effective practice with the culturally and linguistically diverse and changing situations across all sectors in the early childhood field. Primary objectives of all programs include the development of critical thinking and clinical practice skills; shared professional values and a commitment to diversity and inclusion, respect for family, community and cultural contexts; ethical decision-making and reliance on guiding principles of child development and learning; inclusion of the broad range of ages and stages between birth and age 8; a shared set of outcomes and common expectations for professional knowledge, skills and dispositions in six core areas¹; a multidisciplinary approach with an emphasis on assessment of outcomes and a balanced attention to knowledge, skills and dispositions.

B.6 The undergraduate program affords students the opportunity to develop content and pedagogical knowledge and skills above the introductory level through a logically sequenced, coherent, rigorous body of course work. An Associate degree program requires no fewer than 18 semester hours or the equivalent. A bachelor-level major in requires a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent.

B.7 The broad scope of the field is reflected in the undergraduate curriculum, as is a balanced presentation of the issues of the field. All bachelor degree programs can demonstrate that the content areas below are substantively addressed in the core curriculum and build on content at the Associate level. Most baccalaureate programs have multiple courses to represent these and other areas, but these substantive areas provide minimum coverage of the field.

¹ See Table A

Table A.

Course/Content Area	Related topics include but are not limited to:
Promoting Child Development	Young children’s characteristics and needs; multiple interacting influences on children’s development and learning; create environments that are healthy, respectful, supportive, challenging for each child
Building Family and Community Relationships	Know, understand, value the importance and complex characteristics of children’s families and communities; create respectful, reciprocal relationships that support and empower families; involve families in their child’s development and learning
Observing, Documenting and Assessing to Support Young Children and Families	Know and understand the benefits and uses of assessment including observations, documentation, and other effective strategies; use them in a responsible way; use them in partnership with families and other professional to positively influence the development of each child
Using Developmentally Effective Approaches	Understand teaching as complex enterprise dependent of children’s age, characteristics, setting; use positive relationships and supportive interactions as the foundation; know, understand and apply a wide array of developmentally appropriate approaches, instructional strategies and tools to connect with children and families; positively influence development of each child
Using Content Knowledge to Build Meaningful Curriculum	Use knowledge of academic disciplines to design, implement and evaluate experiences that promote positive development and learning; know developmental domains, essential concepts and inquiry tools, structure of content areas/academic subjects, and can identify resources to deepen understanding; design, implement, evaluate meaningful and challenging curriculum that promotes comprehensive development and learning for every child.
Becoming a Professional	Identify and act as an early childhood professional; know and use ethical guidelines and professional standards; continuous and collaborative learners; demonstrate knowledge, reflective and critical perspective on practice making informed decisions; integrate knowledge from multiple sources; informed advocates for sound educational practice and policies

B.8 A variety of early childhood electives are available consistent with faculty, resources, and program objectives. Some bachelor degree programs will offer concentrations in specialized areas, depending upon the composition of the student body and faculty expertise.

B.9 All programs have multiple, supervised practicum opportunities and field experiences for students, which are highly integrated into the academic component of the program and related to educational objectives.

Continuation of Indicators for Standard B: Program Structure and Curriculum

- Outline of curriculum, including required core courses in early childhood, child development, family studies, child care administration or fields appropriate to early child development and aligned with EEC Core Competencies, elective courses, and general education courses
- Indication of where objectives of all programs are taught in curriculum and how measured, including the development of critical thinking and clinical practice skills; shared professional values and a commitment to diversity and inclusion, respect for family, community and cultural contexts; ethical decision-making and reliance on guiding principles of child development and learning
- Course syllabi and copies of final exams for each course
- Comprehensive evaluation or capstone experience

C. Faculty

C. 1 Early Childhood (EC) faculty credentials, number, diversity of educational and professional experience, time commitment and performance are sufficient to accomplish the program's mission and objectives. Faculty specializations are considered in recruitment and hiring decisions.

C. 2 EC faculty holding terminal degrees in the field of early childhood, child development, family studies, child care administration or fields appropriate to early child development are actively sought.

C.3 Two-thirds of the faculty members in degree programs hold an earned doctorate in early childhood, child development or a closely related discipline.

C.4 Faculty hold a minimum of a graduate degree in early childhood, child development or a closely related discipline with at least 18 graduate credits in early childhood or child

development. Institutions do not have undue dependence on faculty who are graduates of their own programs.

C.5 The institution employs an open and orderly process for recruiting and appointing faculty. Early childhood faculty members participate in the search process for new members of the program faculty.

C.6 Programs rely on full-time faculty to teach core courses and to deliver at least two-thirds of the teaching in each degree program. There should be no more than 30 FTE student majors for each full-time faculty member.

C.7 Faculty assignments and workloads allow adequate time to provide effective instruction, advise and evaluate students, continue professional growth, and participate in scholarship, research, and service compatible with the mission and purposes of the institution and program.

C.8 Faculty categories (e.g., full-time, part-time, adjunct) are clearly defined, as is the role of each category in fulfilling both the program's and the institution's mission and purposes.

C.9 Orientation, oversight, evaluation, and professional development opportunities are provided for all faculty, including part-time and adjunct faculty. Faculty take advantage of these opportunities and take the initiative in ensuring their continued competence and growth as teachers and scholars.

C.10 Faculty are demonstrably effective in carrying out their assigned responsibilities

Indicators for Standard C: Faculty

- List of faculty currently teaching in the program, courses taught, whether in the day or evening program, site at which courses are taught, and whether full or part-time
- Indication of full-time, part-time, and FTE instructional faculty, by program.
- Full-time/part-time faculty ratio
- Description of orientation program for new faculty
- Institution funds spent on professional development
- Faculty vitae or Faculty Profile Form, including recent professional contributions
- Number of FTE students majors
- Samples of performance evaluation forms
- Faculty awards, recognitions

Other Supporting Materials:

- Faculty Handbook
- Institutional policy on hiring of faculty
- Institution's Faculty Development Policy
- Faculty Evaluation Policy and Process
- Collective bargaining agreements, where appropriate

D. Admission and Articulation

D.1 The institution specifies and publishes requirements for admission into, continuation in, termination from, or re-admission to its early childhood program(s), which are compatible with its educational purposes. Graduation requirements are clearly stated in appropriate publications and are consistently applied in the degree certification process. Degrees awarded accurately reflect student attainments

D.2 Two-year and four-year colleges and universities enter into articulation and joint admission agreements whenever possible to clarify curricular issues and academic expectations for both parties. These agreements reflect discussion of how best to advise and prepare students at two-year schools who are considering four-year degrees.

D.3 Credit toward graduation is awarded for collegiate level work and appropriate, rigorous, documented learning in early childhood.

D.4 Credit from regionally accredited institutions of higher education are accepted for transfer into an undergraduate program.

D.5 No more than 10 percent of an Associate and/or Bachelor's degree is completed through knowledge-based examinations (e.g., CLEP, Pathways, etc.). All credit earned through examination is clearly documented on a student's official transcript by specific course designations and numbers, including the source of the credit. Block credits are not awarded.

D.6 The institution awards degrees only to those students who have earned at least 25 percent of the credit hours toward the degree through instruction offered by that institution.

Suggested Indicators for Standard D: Admission and Articulation

- Admission requirements and policies for the program and for the institution as a whole
- Agreements leading to the award of credit or payments for credits earned outside of the institution
- Signed articulation agreements
- Enrollment and Retention Reports
- Transfer policy on credit for prior learning
- Report of credits awarded through knowledge-based examinations
- Transcripts of current students and recent graduates

E. Resources

E.1 The program has sufficient facilities, equipment (including classrooms, laboratories, information and computer technology), and budgetary resources to meet program objectives and the needs of faculty and students.

E.2 Students have access to library and information resources, collections and services that are sufficient in quality level, diversity, quantity, and currency to support and enrich the early childhood program's offerings.

E.3 Facilities are adequate to house the collection and equipment so as to foster an atmosphere conducive to inquiry, study, and learning among program students, faculty and staff.

Suggested Indicators for Standard E: Resources

- Budget for early childhood program(s) for past three years
- Vitae of librarians and support personnel
- Library collection in early childhood, child development, family studies and related fields
- Student Use and Technology Policy, on and off-campus
- Materials for locating and obtaining electronic information
- Assessment results of use of library and information resources and facilities by early childhood students and faculty
- Bibliographic instruction and library orientation for early childhood students

F. Student Services

F.1 The program provides an environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students, consistent with its mission and purposes.

F.2 All students in the early childhood program have access to appropriate and effective orientation, academic advisement, career development and placement counseling.

F.3 The institution systematically identifies the characteristics and learning needs of its early childhood student population and makes provision for responding to them.

Suggested Indicators for Standard F: Student Services

- Summary of academic support services provided
- Student Handbook
- Demographic Profile of admitted students
- Satisfaction surveys results of students, graduates, alumni, employer
- American Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements

G. Integrity

G.1 The early childhood program follows the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct for Early Childhood Adult Educators, exemplifies high ethical standards in the management of its affairs

and in all of its dealings with students, faculty, staff, external agencies and organizations, and the general public.

G.2 The program presents itself to students and other members of the interested public by providing information that is complete, accurate, and clear.

G.3 Appropriate publications, print or electronic, contain the early childhood program's mission, objectives, and expected educational outcomes; requirements and procedures and policies related to admissions and the transfer of credit; student fees, charges and refund policies; rules and regulations for student conduct; other items related to attending or withdrawing from the program; courses currently offered; academic policies, procedures and requirements for the early childhood degree or other relevant forms of academic recognition.

G.4 Relevant publications, print or electronic, also include a list of current early childhood faculty and others teaching in early childhood, indicating departmental or program affiliation, distinguishing between those who have full- and part-time status, showing degrees held and the institutions granting them.

G.5 The early childhood program clearly indicates whether any offerings, courses, services, or personnel are not available during a given academic year. It does not list as current any courses not taught for two consecutive years which will not be taught during the third consecutive year.

G.6 The early childhood program has readily available valid documentation for any statements and promises regarding such matters as program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, and achievements of graduates or faculty.

Suggested Indicators for Standard G: Integrity

- Program publications, including brochures, posters, web pages
- Grievance/complaints and appeals procedures
- College catalogue

In addition to the standards above, the following standards are applicable to courses and programs offered off-campus.

H. Branch Campuses, Additional Locations, and Other Instructional Sites

H.1 Evidence that all branch campuses, additional locations, and other Instructional sites are approved by the US Department of Education and eligible under Title IV. Early childhood courses and programs offered at branch campuses, additional locations, and other instructional sites are consistent with the educational objectives of the institution. Such activities are integral parts of the institution and maintain the same academic standards as courses and programs offered on campus or in more traditional formats.

H.2 Students have ready access to appropriate learning resources. Sufficient library and information resources and services are readily accessible to students wherever the program is located or however it is delivered, and sufficient and appropriate orientation and training are provided for their use. The facilities foster an atmosphere conducive to inquiry, study, and learning among program students, faculty and staff.

H.3 The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of the program. On-campus faculty has a substantive role in the design and implementation of off-campus programs.

H.4 If there are programs available to students via distance technology or other means, off-site instruction is conducted in a manner that maximizes student-faculty interactions and ensures quality.

Suggested Indicators for Standard H: Branch Campuses, Additional Locations, and Other Instructional Sites

- Description of all instructional sites in which program courses are taught
- Program enrollment data by instructional site
- Summary of academic support services and learning resources available at each location
- Organizational charts
- List of faculty currently teaching in the program, courses taught, whether in the day or evening program, site at which courses are taught, and whether full- or part-time
- Access to programs via distance technology

I. Program Quality and Effectiveness

I.1 The program undergoes systematic evaluation of all program components and uses the results for program improvement.

I.2 The program demonstrates that its graduates have acquired the knowledge and developed the skills that are identified as the program's objectives and student learning outcomes.

I.3 The program demonstrates that students completing courses in non-traditional time periods and modalities, in different divisions, and at satellite or branch campuses acquire levels of knowledge, understanding, and competencies comparable to those expected in similar programs offered in more traditional time periods, modalities and locations.

I.4 The institution periodically reviews the program under established, clearly defined institutional policies and uses the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness. The review includes an assessment of effectiveness, currency, and continued need.

Suggested Indicators for Standard I: Program Quality and Effectiveness

- Written program assessment plan
- Indication of where program objectives are taught in curriculum, how learning outcomes are measured prior to graduation, and the results of such assessment
- Evidence demonstrating that the program is achieving its mission, goals, objectives and outcomes
- Results of program evaluation including graduate satisfaction with program, employer satisfaction with graduates; retention and graduation rates; placement rates
- Reports from institution's program reviews, indicating cycle of reviews, findings, and related program improvements
- Analysis of student evaluations of teaching

Other supporting material:

- Institution's policy on academic program review
- Institution's program assessment policy

Part II: Review Process and Protocols

The protocol for the DHE inquiry is as follows:

1. The DHE will initiate an inquiry when facts suggesting a reasonable probability of non-compliance are brought to the attention of the Board.
2. The institution will be required to submit a completed EC Scholarship Participation Report, consistent with instructions to DHE, within 15 business days.
3. Once the report has been received and deemed complete, an external review team, appointed by the DHE will evaluate the Scholarship Participation Report within 15 business-days and submit their findings to DHE.
4. The institution will be provided with the external review teams' evaluation, prepare a response to the review and submit the response to DHE.
5. The external review and the institutional response will be reviewed by board staff.
6. A recommendation will be made to the Board or the Commissioner for action as needed
7. A decision regarding the institutions' eligibility will be made