



Guide to Application for CAEP Accreditation – Phase I

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The CAEP Application for Accreditation, Phase I (fill-able PDF) can be found [online](#).

I. Preface

Thank you for your interest in accreditation by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Through its accreditation process, CAEP assures the quality of educator preparation and supports continuous improvement in order to strengthen P-12 student learning. Any provider of educator preparation that agrees with CAEP's aims and wishes to engage in evidence-based reflection and improvement is welcome to seek accreditation through CAEP. This *Guide* is intended to help Educator Preparation Providers (EPPs) take the first steps in the accreditation process. The following paragraphs provide a brief synopsis of CAEP's aims and priorities; the [Guide to CAEP Accreditation – Phase II](#) explains the subsequent steps of the application process in greater detail.

CAEP's mission is to promote excellence in educator preparation through evidence-based accreditation of EPPs. EPPs participating in the CAEP accreditation system develop valid, reliable, actionable lines of evidence showing that they meet the CAEP standards and are engaged in continuously improving their preparation programs in partnership with local schools and other stakeholders. The CAEP accreditation process includes scrutiny of each individual licensure or certificate program, assurance of the quality of data relied upon in the self study, focus on program completers' impact on P-12 student learning and development, and analysis of evidence in conjunction with EPPs' partners and stakeholders.

Each EPP engages in a thorough, evidence-based, self study in which it both examines each "course of study" or "program" that leads to recommendation for a particular license or certificate and also presents evidence for its entire educator preparation effort in aggregate. Recognizing the diversity of institutional and organizational entities involved in educator preparation, and valuing organizational choice among alternative ways of documenting quality and improvement, CAEP provides three pathways to structure the self-study process. As part of the Phase I Application, an EPP selects that pathway that best fits its institutional context and mode of collaboration. Note that EPPs new to the accreditation process can currently apply to the eligibility track or the candidacy track, which they choose in the Phase II Application. Those in the eligibility track will be expected to schedule a visit within two years, while those in the candidacy track may take up to five years to schedule a visit.

The most comprehensive explanation of CAEP's expectations for EPPs is found in the [Accreditation Manual](#). EPPs are encouraged to review the standards and rationale statements, and to use the standards as a basis for reflection on their current program operations and, in particular, their current capacity to use valid and reliable data to monitor and improve program elements. As you read the application guidance and begin to complete the application, please keep track of your process, insights, and comments. CAEP [welcomes your feedback](#) in its own commitment to continuous improvement!

II. Overview of the Application Process

Currently Accredited Educator Preparation Providers Need Not Apply as New

Who needs to apply? EPPs that currently participate in *neither the CAEP accreditation system nor those of its predecessors (NCATE or TEAC)* are encouraged to apply.

Although in a sense, all EPPs are “new to CAEP” because CAEP itself is a new organization, EPPs that have been accredited by or are completing initial accreditation with CAEP’s predecessor organizations (NCATE or TEAC) **need not** complete an application to CAEP. EPPs that already participate in the accreditation system should simply continue to complete annual reports, update contact information and associated tables annually in the Accreditation Information Management System (AIMS), and maintain contact with CAEP staff regarding their next accreditation visit. Be sure to confirm your place in the schedule *at least two years prior* to the end of the current accreditation term!

Initial, or First, Accreditation

An Educator Preparation Provider (EPP) seeking accreditation for the first time completes a two-phase application process to enter the accreditation system. CAEP provides two ‘tracks’ for those seeking accreditation for the first time:

- **Accreditation eligibility** status is the appropriate starting point for EPPs that judge themselves to be ready to engage directly in an accreditation review and are confident that they will have sufficient evidence of meeting all five CAEP standards *within two years*.
- **Candidacy for accreditation** status is the appropriate starting point for EPP’s that opt to enter the accreditation process in order to ensure that they are better prepared to address all of CAEP’s standards successfully in their accreditation bid *within five years*.

When EPPs complete the Phase II Application, they are encouraged to use the [Readiness for Accreditation Self-Assessment Instrument](#) as they decide which route to select. In making the decision, EPPs should be aware of [CAEP’s policy](#) regarding first-time accreditation, which specifies that all standards must be met in order for first accreditation to be granted. In other words, an EPP’s first accreditation bid results in an “up or down” decision (that is, no probationary accreditation is granted in first accreditation cases). The [Readiness for Accreditation Self-Assessment Instrument](#) highlights the evidence required to address the CAEP standards and allows an EPP to rate its own readiness to produce adequate evidence. Contact CAEP [accreditation staff](#) at any point for further guidance or informal dialogue regarding the choice between “eligibility” or “candidacy.”

III. Steps for Completing the Application to CAEP

The following process is suggested as a way of getting started on the accreditation process while completing the application in its two phases.

- 1. Review.** Study and understand the CAEP standards, application process, and requirements (including the [accreditation manual](#) and [Evidence Guide](#)). Study the five standards and their components and refer to the glossary for definitions. Review this *Guide* and access the website (www.caepnet.org) for the most up-to-date guidance on the evidence for the self study.
- 2. Complete Phase I of the application.** This guide contains the materials and guidelines for Phase I of the application process. Complete the form, obtain required signatures, and email the application to CAEP.
- 3. Inventory available evidence.** While waiting for log-in and password to the Accreditation Information Management System (AIMS)—which are needed in order to complete Phase II of the application—compile an inventory of the evidence that is currently available on candidate and completer performance, noting what evidence the EPP relies on and uses, what it does not, and what it might begin to collect.
- 4. Begin to evaluate the quality of evidence.** Quality of evidence is an essential aspect of CAEP’s accreditation process. EPPs should be able to answer the following regarding evidence used in the self study: (1) What is the measure?, (2) what evidence is available regarding its quality?, (3) what criteria have been established for successful performance (and why)?, (4) what do the results mean?, and (5) how are results used in improvement? (link: [Evidence Guide](#))
- 5. Gather information to be entered in the EPP’s AIMS profile in Phase II.** Completing Phase II of the application will require: (1) completion of tables that provide a synopsis of (a) each of the EPP’s discrete programs, (b) the qualifications of clinical educator and other faculty members, (c) an accreditation plan, and (d) the EPP’s sufficiency of resources to provide a quality program (see Phase II, Table 5); (2) completion of the [Readiness for Accreditation Self-Assessment Instrument](#); and (3) either evidence of regional accreditation or completion of an Evidence of Capacity table (Phase II, Table 6).
- 6. Complete [The Readiness for Accreditation Self-Assessment Instrument](#) and discuss with stakeholders.** Complete the instrument with the study of standards and inventory of evidence as background. Using the instrument, engage in discussion of the CAEP standards and evidence needs with internal and external stakeholders. Reach consensus on whether to enter the system on the “candidacy” or “eligibility” track to accreditation.
- 7. [Complete and submit Phase II of the application](#).** Develop a complete draft of the Phase II application, including the self-evaluation instrument. Review the draft with stakeholders, revise as needed, and upload the final version into CAEP’s Accreditation Information Management System (AIMS).

Checklist for preparing the Application to CAEP

1. Review

When Who

Study CAEP's standards, process, and requirements.		
Review the Guidelines for Applying to CAEP .		
Review the CAEP website and evidence guidelines .		

2. Complete Phase I of the Application

When Who

Download the Phase I CAEP application .		
Collect information needed to complete Phase I of the application.		
Obtain required signature(s) to document commitment to accreditation.		
Send completed Phase I application to CAEPapplications@caepnet.org .		

3. Inventory Available Evidence

When Who

Compile an inventory of existing evidence pertaining to candidate and completer performance for use in completing the readiness checklist.		
Assess each source of evidence: Is it relied upon? Is it used for program monitoring or improvement? What more is needed?		
Make an initial analysis of the quality of the evidence: What evidence is there regarding the quality of measures? How is it used?		

4. Complete Readiness Checklist, Review, and Discuss

When Who

Complete the readiness checklist.		
Seek feedback and continue to revise and collect evidence as needed.		

5. Finalize and Submit Phase II Application

When Who

Compile a complete draft of the entire application.		
Seek further feedback from key stakeholders and revise as needed.		
Submit the final version in the AIMS system.		

IV. Completing Phase I of the CAEP Application

In Phase I of the application, the EPP completes the [CAEP Application for Accreditation](#) which requests basic information about the EPP and assurance that its administration is committed to the accreditation process. The Phase I application form includes four parts:

Part I: Contact information for the EPP and key administrators. This section records the EPP’s and institution’s (if applicable) website URL, address, phone, email, and other pertinent contact information which will be entered into the EPPs profile in the Accreditation Information Management System (AIMS). This information will be updated annually *by the EPP* in order to maintain accurate records for communication between the EPP and CAEP.

Part II: Proposed accreditation pathway and on-site visit date. The EPP makes an initial selection of the accreditation pathway (choosing from among the three listed below) and indicates the timeframe in which it hopes to host an accreditation visit. Note that the decision of whether to proceed within two years or five to a full accreditation visit will be made tentatively in Phase II of the application process and finalized in consultation with CAEP staff. Regardless of the entry “track” selected, three accreditation pathways—each defined by a particular approach to undertaking the self- study process—are available for the accreditation process; hyperlinks below lead to those pathways’ respective overviews. Note that each of the three pathways addresses all CAEP standards and require evidence of the same quality. The proposed on-site visit date must follow the timelines of the proposed pathway.

1. **The Selected Improvement (SI)** pathway demonstrates progress in achieving a higher level of excellence through its “Selected Improvement Plan” (SIP) that identifies a CAEP standard(s), component(s) of one standard, or several components across more than one standard as an area of focus and that shows data-driven improvements over time.
2. **The Inquiry Brief (IB)** process begins with claims the provider makes about the professional competence of its completers. The provider claims flow from its own goals and mission and can be aligned with the expectations about candidate and completer outcomes expressed in CAEP Standard 1, supported in part by evidence described in CAEP Standard 1. The provider is encouraged to focus on empirical inquiry that is meaningful both to its own community and to those who rely on CAEP for quality assurance, and to make its case for accreditation using the evidence faculty members rely on to convince themselves that their candidates and completers are competent and that the faculty has the capacity to offer quality programs and to steadily enhance these programs. The provider presents a self-study of its claims in a research monograph, called an *Inquiry Brief*, which includes a rationale for the assessments used to investigate the claims, a description of methods, a presentation of results, and a discussion of the meaning and implications of the findings. Finally, the provider demonstrates its capacity to monitor and improve quality in large part by conducting and reporting on an internal audit of its quality assurance system.
3. **The Transformation Initiative (TI)** pathway (currently not available) is a Research and Development (R&D) approach to accreditation, addressing a major issue or challenge in educator preparation. EPPs or systems (states, school–IHE collaborations, etc.) engage in rigorous research investigation to inform the profession and/or offer research-proven models for replication of its own promising practices.

Before selecting a pathway, review the descriptions and the CAEP Accreditation Manual (downloadable from [here](#)) to determine which pathway is the best “fit” for your EPP. Feel free to contact [CAEP’s Accreditation Associate for Applications](#) for information as you make the determination. CAEP staff will send appropriate follow-up materials and establish a primary point of contact for the EPP in light of the pathway selected. Pathways can be changed in consultation with CAEP staff up to a year prior to a scheduled site visit.

Part III: EPP completer information. In this section, the EPP reports the total number of program completers in a given academic year. Program completers are defined as the aggregate total of all individuals who:

- completed a program that made them eligible for a teaching license¹,
- are licensed teachers who completed a graduate program,
- completed a program to work as a school administrator, school psychologist, school library media specialist, reading specialist, and other specialties in schools², or
- completed a bachelor's, post-bachelor's, master's, specialist, or doctoral program in the EPP whether or not that program led to a state license or credential.

The number of EPP completers is updated annually as part of the annual reporting process and is used to determine the annual fee to remain active in the accreditation process. [The fee schedule](#) can be accessed on the CAEP website.

Part IV: Commitment by Key EPP Administrators. The final section of the Phase I application form consists of the signatures of the EPP's Chief Executive Officer and Head Administrator. The signatures attest that the information reported is accurate and confirms that the EPP is committed to the accreditation process in its agreement to:

1. Provide all information requested by CAEP to carry out its accrediting functions,
2. Complete the accreditation process according to published CAEP policies, including schedule requirements for the selected accreditation pathway (requests to change pathway must be made at least one year in advance of the site visit and may impact timelines),
3. Comply with CAEP policies, including disclosure of accreditation status (see Policy XXXIX, Public Disclosure and Transparency of Accreditation Information), and
4. Submit its annual fee according to the fee schedule on the CAEP website and agrees to pay future annual fees and any fees associated with accreditation visits.

The [CAEP Application for Accreditation](#) can be accessed on CAEP's website and is submitted as an email attachment to CAEPapplications@caepnet.org.

V. CAEP's Processing of Phase I Applications

When Phase I of the application process is completed and accepted, CAEP staff will send the EPP a welcome letter with information about completing Phase II of the application through CAEP's Accreditation Information Management System (AIMS). The welcome letter will contain the EPP's unique user ID and password to access the system. These credentials are used throughout the accreditation process. Safeguard them because the EPP's confidential accreditation materials will be viewable and editable by anyone using these credentials.

¹ May be a professional degree, teaching certificate, or other nomenclature used in different states or outside of the United States.

² These programs are designed for professionals who work in P-12 settings to perform duties other than classroom teaching but are housed in or administered by the EPP. Outside of the United States these programs may or may not be included. Seek clarification from CAEP staff.