

Entry into Certification Programs Guidelines Effective August 1, 2015

In October 2014, the Pennsylvania General Assembly enacted Act 168. Specifically, Act 168 requires an assessment of basic skills to be completed by preparation candidates prior to entry into a Pennsylvania baccalaureate teacher preparation program. It also states that the basic skills assessment is not required for entry into a post-baccalaureate preparation program or for someone who holds a post-baccalaureate degree. Finally, Act 168 mandates that no baccalaureate certification program shall admit a student who has not met these requirements by August 1, 2015.

In consideration of the requirements of Act 168 and its impact on entry into baccalaureate teacher preparation programs and post-baccalaureate teacher preparation programs, the Bureau of School Leadership and Teacher Quality is releasing the following guidance to clarify the requirements of Act 168 and the responsibilities of institutions regarding entry of candidates into teacher preparation programs.

These guidelines were developed in consultation with stakeholders, upon review of Chapter 354, sample program advisement sheets and the Pennsylvania Statewide Program-Program Articulation Agreement for Degrees Leading to PreK-4 Teacher Certification developed by the Transfer and Articulation Oversight Committee (TAOC). Based upon the information gathered, the Department identified common education foundational courses across programs to develop the following guidelines, which are intended to be responsive to programs and provide as much flexibility as possible under the law.

Baccalaureate teacher preparation programs should utilize the following Bureau guidance to ensure compliance with the specific requirements and intent of Act 168.

A. UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM ENTRY GUIDELINES

- Candidates must take and pass the basic skills assessment prior to formal entry into the program and prior to taking professional core courses other than those listed in these guidelines.
- Undergraduate candidates who have passed the basic skills assessment may be formally admitted into a preparation program any time after they have earned 48 credits. Candidates who have obtained 60 undergraduate credits as required in the TAOC agreement may not be permitted to enter a baccalaureate teacher preparation program unless or until they pass a basic skills assessment.

- 48 credits is the minimum number of credits required before entry into a teacher preparation program pursuant to 22 Pa. Code § 354.31(2).¹
- Sixty credits is equal to one-half of the 120 credits required to earn a Bachelor of Science degree.
- Candidates may complete foundational level courses prior to formal program entry. PDE recognizes the following courses as education foundation courses. The provider may offer the following courses before formal entry for students with less than 60 credits.
 - ✓ Child and/or Adolescent Development *
 - ✓ Curricular Integration*
 - ✓ Development of Exceptional Children
 - ✓ Educational Ethics
 - ✓ Educational Psychology
 - ✓ Educational Theories and Practices
 - ✓ Family and Community*
 - ✓ Field Experience:* (both classroom and field)
 - Stage 1
 - Stage 2
 - ✓ Foundations of Assessment
 - ✓ General Education and Major Courses:
 - Math
 - Science
 - Social Studies
 - English
 - Reading
 - ✓ Inclusive Education
 - ✓ Instructional Design
 - ✓ Introduction to Early Childhood Education
 - ✓ Introduction to Education
 - ✓ Introduction to Middle Level Education
 - ✓ Introduction to Reading, Writing and Literacy
 - ✓ Introduction to Secondary Education
 - ✓ Introduction to Special Education*
 - ✓ Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners*

¹ Specifically 22 Pa. Code § 354.31 (2) “An applicant who intends to enter a preparation program that culminates in a bachelor’s degree may not be formally admitted to an initial professional educator preparation program before completion of 48 semester credit hours or the full-time equivalent of college level study.”

- ✓ Professionalism*
- ✓ Subject and Pedagogy: early literacy, early math, early science, the arts and creative expression*

* identifies course work required in the 60 credit hour Statewide Program-Program Articulation Agreement for Degrees Leading to PreK-4 Teacher Certification.

B. TRANSFER STUDENTS

Transfer students must take and pass the basic skills assessment prior to program entry/transfer if they have earned more than 60 semester hours of credits and/or have taken professional core courses.

C. POST-BACCALAUREATE CANDIDATES

Candidates who do not meet the basic skills requirement may complete an arts or sciences degree at the undergraduate level and then complete a **PDE approved post-baccalaureate** program after earning their undergraduate degree.

All post-baccalaureate candidates are required to submit their undergraduate and post-baccalaureate transcripts through TIMS as part of the application completion process. PDE will identify a student as undergraduate or post-baccalaureate based on their date of entry into a teacher preparation program and a review of the candidate's transcripts. PDE will monitor programs to ensure compliance with Act 168.

Candidates who began their teacher preparation program as an undergraduate prior to August 1, 2015 and are now completing the program at the post-baccalaureate level must take and pass the Basic Skills test prior to being granted certification.

D. EXEMPTION

A candidate seeking an advanced degree, such as a Master's or Doctoral level degree, is exempt from the basic skills assessment. A second bachelor's degree is not an advanced degree.

E. UNDERGRADUATE CANDIDATES ADMITTED PRIOR TO AUGUST 1, 2015

Programs are encouraged to have candidates matriculated into a certification program prior to August 1, 2015 take and pass the Basic Skills test prior to graduation as this eliminates the possibility of a candidate not being certified due to unsatisfactory basic skill scores and allows the candidate time to change their major.