



CREDENTIAL INFORMATION ALERT

DATE:
March 1, 2022

NUMBER:
22-02

**SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY BILL 320: REGIONAL ACCREDITATION FOR COURSEWORK AND DEGREES
USED FOR CERTIFICATION PURPOSES**

Summary:

The purpose of this Credential Information Alert (CIA) is to alert the field to the signing of Assembly Bill 320 (Medina) and its effects on regional accreditation and institutes of higher education (IHE) for candidates applying for certification. AB 320, effective January 1, 2022, expands the definition of a "regionally accredited" IHE to include both the period of time when an IHE is officially accredited by a regional accrediting agency, and also the time in which the IHE held preaccreditation status with the regional accrediting agency if the IHE achieved full accreditation within five years of preaccreditation. This definition would apply to all statutory and regulatory references where coursework or degrees required for certification must be from an IHE that is regionally accredited, including the requirements for teacher preparation and credentialing.

Background:

Regional accreditation assures the Commission that an institution of higher education (IHE) meets certain standards in relation to educational effectiveness, student learning, and institutional capacity. The regionally accrediting bodies are the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the Higher Learning Commission, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the New England Commission of Higher Education, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

Several sections of the Education Code (EC) require a candidate to hold a Bachelor's or higher degree from a regionally accredited institution to be issued a teaching credential. EC sections 44203(e)(1) and (2) define the term *Basic Teaching Credential*; both sections require possession of a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited institution.

The U.S. Department of Education’s standards for regional accrediting agencies include a preaccreditation status period of no more than five years. Preaccreditation is a status of public recognition that an accrediting agency grants to an institution or program for a limited period of time that signifies the accrediting agency has determined that the institution or program is progressing towards accreditation and is likely to attain accreditation before the expiration of that limited period of time. Preaccreditation is also referred to as “candidacy” by many regional accrediting agencies, including the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission, which is the regional accrediting body for California and other western states.

An institution that has reached preaccreditation/candidacy status with a regional accrediting agency has demonstrated compliance with the requirements and standards set forth in the application for accreditation and is progressing towards full accreditation. Prior to the passage of AB 320, candidates who completed their degree even one day prior to an IHE’s official designation as regionally accredited were unable to use their coursework and/or degree for certification purposes.

Key Provisions:

Assembly Bill 320 has updated the definition of “regionally accredited” to include both an institution of higher education that has been accredited by one of the regionally accrediting bodies in the United States, or an institution of higher education that held preaccreditation status at the time the degree of an applicant for a credential was conferred, if that institution achieved full regional accreditation status within five years of earning preaccreditation status. Degrees earned at IHEs in this preaccreditation status are acceptable under AB 320 towards meeting degree requirements for credentials and permits. This also means the Commission can accept the coursework completed at such universities for the purposes of satisfying the Basic Skills Requirement and meeting Subject Matter Competency.

Candidates who wish to use their degree or coursework that was earned at their accredited institution during preaccreditation status must include official documentation that verifies the preaccreditation period of the institution with their completed application packet. This may include official transcripts showing the date in which the coursework or degree program was completed and an official letter on letterhead from either the regional accrediting agency or the IHE that indicates the dates that the institution held preaccreditation or candidacy status.

Important Dates:

January 1, 2022 – Effective date of Assembly Bill 320.

Sources:

AB 320 (Medina):

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB320&showamends=false

Contact Information:

Credential questions can be directed to the Commission's Information Services Unit at credentials@ctc.ca.gov.