



# PROGRAM SPONSOR ALERT

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**DATE:**  
September 3, 2021

**NUMBER:**  
21-10

**SUBJECT: Implementation of New Options for Meeting the Statutory Subject Matter Competence Requirement**

*\*See updates in [PSA 23-04](#).*

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## Summary

[Assembly Bill \(AB\) 130 \(Chap. 44, Stats. of 2021\)](#) was signed by the Governor and became effective on July 9, 2021. Provisions of the bill create new options for credential candidates to meet the subject matter competence requirement. This Program Sponsor Alert provides information about the implementation of these new options for Commission-approved preparation programs to determine whether candidates meet the statutory subject matter competence requirement for the credential they are seeking.

## Background

Candidates for a teaching credential must demonstrate they are proficient in the subject matter area of their intended credential. Prior to AB 130, two options existed for candidates to demonstrate subject matter proficiency: 1) completion of a Commission-approved subject matter preparation program (SMPP), or 2) passage of the relevant subject matter proficiency examination (California Subject Matter Examinations for Teachers or CSET). The content knowledge required is described by the Subject Matter Requirements (SMRs) which are statements of expected knowledge, as identified by content experts, that have been adopted by the Commission for each credential content area. By statute, the SMRs are aligned with the student content standards adopted by the State Board of Education. These SMRs serve as the basis upon which subject matter preparation programs and the subject matter examinations are developed. The SMRs are available on the Commission's website at: [Subject Matter Requirements](#).

The new legislation, AB 130, added several additional options for candidates to demonstrate subject matter proficiency to the existing options. [Coded Correspondence 21-05](#) released on July 22, 2021, provided an overview of the new options for candidates to meet both the Basic Skills and Subject Matter requirements. The new options for demonstration of subject matter include the following:

- 1) Completion of an academic major in the subject area of the credential being sought.
- 2) Completion of coursework addressing each of the Commission-adopted subject matter domains.
- 3) Completion of a combination of coursework and examination(s) that meets or exceeds the subject matter domains.

The information that follows describes which of the new subject matter verification options are currently available to be implemented by all Commission-approved educator preparation programs, which are available at this time to only those educator preparation programs at institutions with Commission-approved subject matter programs, and which aspects of these options require revisions to Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations before all preparation programs may implement these options. To ensure timely implementation of these new options, the Commission is seeking approval of emergency regulations.

It is important to note that these options represent options that candidates can use in order to meet the mandatory subject matter requirement. Educator preparation programs will need to verify that a candidate has met the option for which the candidate is seeking this determination. The options and the program's role in determining that a candidate has met the intended option(s) are discussed below.

### **Currently Available for Implementation by All Commission-Approved Educator Preparation Programs**

#### ***Verification of successful completion of an academic degree major in the subject area of the credential being sought.***

This option is currently available for candidates who have completed an academic degree in a major that exactly matches one of those identified in the law as indicated below:

*Multiple Subject candidates:* Liberal Studies degrees as well as Liberal Studies degrees that include any focus or concentration in the title. Examples include, but are not limited to, *Liberal Studies: Urban Education* and *Liberal Studies: Elementary Education*.

*Single Subject candidates:* The major must be an exact degree/credential subject match in one of the subjects named in Education Code section [44257\(a\)](#). These subjects are:

- Agriculture
- Art
- Business
- Dance

- English
- World Language (in any of the languages for which there is a credential)
- Health Science
- Home Economics
- Industrial and Technology Education
- Mathematics
- Music
- Physical Education
- Science (including Biology, Chemistry, Geoscience or Earth and Space Science, and Physics)
- Social Science
- Theater

At this time, the Commission will also accept applied majors in the single subject credential areas (e.g., Applied Mathematics, Applied Physics) and exact majors in one of the single subject areas that may have additional modifiers (e.g., Biology: Environmental Biology; Art: Art History; and Physical Education: Kinesiology).

*Education Specialist candidates:* The academic degree major must be in one of the subject areas listed above for either Multiple Subject or Single Subject candidates.

Candidates whose majors are not listed above are not eligible for this option at this time. However, the Commission is seeking to expand the array of majors that may be used under this option through emergency regulations. If approved, the list of majors that would be allowable under this option will be noted in regulations and would include the subjects identified in [Title 5, Section 80005](#) (for Single Subject Credentials) as well as majors in Liberal Arts, Interdisciplinary Studies, and Elementary Education (for Multiple Subject Credentials). These academic degree majors are not currently allowed for purposes of demonstrating subject matter proficiency, but if the Commission's proposed regulatory language is approved by the Office of Administrative Law (OAL), the Commission will notify Commission-approved programs of the availability of these additional majors.

Master's or doctoral degrees completed by a candidate in the exact area of the credential being sought may also count as verification of subject matter competence. Additionally, the law does not limit the recency of the degree earned so candidates may have earned the degree in years past.

### **Options Currently Available Only for Institutions with Commission-approved Subject Matter Preparation Programs**

***Successful completion of coursework addressing each of the Commission-adopted subject matter domains.***

This option is currently **available only** for use by Commission-approved institutions with Commission-approved subject matter preparation programs, and these educator preparation programs may move forward with implementing this new option in only those subject areas for which the subject matter preparation program has been approved. For example, under this option, a Commission-approved educator preparation program at an institution with a Commission-approved English subject matter preparation program may review prior candidate coursework in the subject area of English and determine that the candidate meets the subject matter requirement in English, but may not do that for the subject of Art if the institution does not also have a Commission-approved subject matter program in Art.

Under existing regulations ([Title 5, Section 80094](#)), Commission-approved subject matter programs already have the authority to determine equivalency of coursework for the purposes of determining subject matter proficiency for the subject areas for which they are approved. Therefore, this option is currently available for institutions with Commission-approved subject matter programs. These programs have undergone extensive review and the program coursework is aligned with the Subject Matter Requirements (SMRs). These institutions may review transcripts and approve coursework for those subject areas for which they have a Commission-approved subject matter program. These institutions may determine if coursework successfully completed by a candidate meets or exceeds the domains of the Subject Matter Requirements (SMRs) in the subject areas for which they have been approved. Educator preparation programs at these institutions should work closely with their Commission-approved subject matter programs in implementing this provision. The Subject Matter Requirements and corresponding domains are available on the Commission's webpage at: [Subject Matter Requirements and Related Domains](#).

This option is **not yet available** to all Commission-approved educator preparation programs. Candidates in institutions with Commission-approved educator preparation programs that do not also have a Commission-approved subject matter program in the subject area of the credential being sought will need to use other available options for demonstrating subject matter proficiency until changes to the Title 5 regulations have completed the regulatory process. These emergency regulations are needed to ensure that conditions and criteria are clearly defined and are consistently applied by all educator preparation programs across the state. At that time, the Commission will inform educator preparation programs when they may begin implementing this option and will provide additional implementation guidance.

***Combination of coursework and examination(s) that meets or exceeds the subject matter domains.***

This option is currently **available only** for use by Commission-approved institutions with Commission-approved subject matter preparation programs, and these educator preparation programs may move forward with implementing this new option in only those subject areas for which the subject matter preparation program has been approved.

This option allows candidates to use a combination of passage of one or more applicable CSET subtests and successful completion of coursework to demonstrate proficiency in all areas of the subject matter domains. As noted above, Commission-approved subject matter programs already have the authority to determine equivalency of coursework for the purposes of determining subject matter competence ([Title 5, Section 80094](#)) in those subject areas for which they are approved. In order to implement the combination coursework/CSET option, the preparation program must determine which CSET subtests the candidate has taken and passed and what coursework the candidate has successfully completed. In totality, the combination of passing the relevant CSET subtests and successfully completing appropriate content coursework must address all of the domains outlined in the SMRs for that subject area. Educator preparation programs at institutions eligible for this option should work closely with their Commission-approved subject matter programs in implementing this provision.

A document that outlines the CSET subtests for all subject matter examinations and the corresponding subject matter domains is available [SMRs and Corresponding CSET Examination Subtests](#). Commission-approved programs will need to use these charts to determine the mix and match options available to candidates based on the coursework completed and examination(s) they have passed.

This option is **not currently available** for use by all Commission-approved educator preparation programs. This option is only available at this time for use by Commission-approved institutions with Commission-approved subject matter preparation programs for those subject areas for which they have approval. The Commission is seeking approval of emergency regulations that will allow all Commission-approved educator preparation programs to implement this provision of the law. If approved, these programs will also be able to conduct a transcript review to determine whether a candidate's coursework meets the domains of the SMRs along with reviewing those CSET subtests that a candidate has passed to verify that, in totality, a candidate has met the Subject Matter Competency Requirement. These emergency regulations are needed to ensure that conditions and criteria are clearly defined and are consistently applied by all educator preparation programs across the state. The Commission will notify the field once the Office of Administrative Law (OAL) rules on the emergency regulations packet submitted by the Commission.

### **Existing Options Still Available to All Candidates**

In addition to the new options made available through AB 130, candidates may continue to meet the subject matter competency requirement using the existing statutory options of either (a) passing the appropriate [California Subject Examination for Teachers \(CSET\) Examination](#) or (b) completing a [Commission-approved subject matter program](#).

### **Timeline**

The Commission is seeking approval of emergency regulations in order to implement the provisions of this new law as quickly and efficiently as possible. If emergency regulations are approved by OAL, these regulations will go into effect and the Commission will have one year to submit non-emergency regulations. The Commission is committed to working with stakeholders

to identify any additional implementation issues that need to be resolved and included in future regulations packages.

### **Recommending Candidates**

The Commission is working to add additional subject matter preparation pathway codes to the CTC Online recommendation system. Currently, programs may only submit recommendations for candidates who have met the subject matter requirement through the examination route or through the approved subject matter preparation program route. The Commission anticipates that these new codes for subject matter preparation via degree major, coursework, and a combination of options will be available in the coming weeks.

In the interim, programs should begin to evaluate candidates for subject matter competence by following the guidance above and can proceed as follows:

1. For candidates who are nearing program completion or who need to be recommended for an Intern or Preliminary credential, the Commission advises that programs hold off on submission of those recommendations until the CTC Online system is updated. If necessary, programs may request an earlier issuance date when submitting recommendations to ensure that candidates who need their document for employment purposes are appropriately authorized as long as that issuance date follows the requirements outlines in [Title 5, Section 80440](#).
2. For candidates who took advantage of the Governor's Executive Order that waives subject matter for program enrollment, and are enrolled in the teacher preparation program currently, programs can begin to identify candidates that have the met subject matter requirement through completion of a degree major or coursework (if identified by an approved Subject Matter Preparation Program). Programs can begin advising these candidates that they do meet the subject matter requirement through one of these new options and therefore do not need to complete the CSET examinations.
3. For candidates applying for enrollment in a preparation program, programs can begin to identify candidates who have met the subject matter requirement through completion of a degree major or coursework (if identified by an approved Subject Matter Preparation Program). Programs can begin enrolling these candidates in the program with the understanding that they do meet the subject matter requirement through one of these new options and therefore do not need to complete the CSET examinations.

The Commission will alert programs as soon as the new recommendation options for subject matter via degree major, coursework, or a combination of options are available in the CTC Online system and will provide guidance on how to select the correct subject matter preparation pathway code.

### **Technical Assistance**

The following webpage contains the most recent information on the options for candidates to demonstrate subject matter competence and available resources for program sponsors:

[Demonstration of Subject Matter Competence](#) . The Commission staff will update this page with new information as it becomes available.

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document will be available shortly on the page link above. Additionally, a technical assistance webinar for preparation programs on the various options for candidate demonstration of subject matter competence and the process for recommending candidates will be scheduled in the coming weeks. Notification of the webinar will be provided in the PSD e-news.

### **Implications for the Accreditation Process**

Accurate records should be maintained by all Commission-approved educator preparation programs identifying specifically how each candidate demonstrated meeting the statutory subject matter competency requirement, as well as the program's process used for determining subject matter competency status for each candidate. The Commission will be revising its accreditation process in accordance with these new provisions of law, and information on any changes will be shared with the field when available.

**Important Note:** Flexibilities granted in AB 130 (Chap 44, Statutes of 2021) or by Commission action to address the needs of candidates impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, as outlined in [PSA 21-05](#) and [PSA 21-08](#), still remain in place.

### **Sources:**

[Education Code Section 44259](#)

[Education Code Section 44257 \(a\)](#)

[Education Code Section 44282](#)

[Education Code Section 44310](#)

[California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 80005](#)

[California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 80094](#)

### **Contact Information:**

For program questions about this PSA please contact: [PSDInfo@ctc.ca.gov](mailto:PSDInfo@ctc.ca.gov). For information about the credential recommendation process, please contact [credentials@ctc.ca.gov](mailto:credentials@ctc.ca.gov)