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April 27, 2020

To: Deans/Directors of NYS Institutions Offering Educator Preparation Programs

From: William P. Murphy 

Subject: Acceptance of "Pass" Grades, or its Equivalent, in the Individual Evaluation Pathway to Certification During the Spring, Summer, or Fall 2020 Terms

Several New York State institutions of higher education have implemented a pass/fail or similar grading policy for courses in the Spring 2020 semester in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Candidates who are enrolled in a New York State registered educator preparation program that switched to pass/fail grading would not be adversely affected by a pass/fail grading policy for certification purposes, if they receive a college recommendation for certification and apply through the "Approved Educator Preparation Program" pathway.

However, candidates who complete college courses and apply for certification through the "Individual Evaluation" pathway may be affected by a pass/fail grading policy. In this certification pathway, the Office of Teaching Initiatives reviews individual courses on a transcript when evaluating certificate applications.

Content core or pedagogical core courses with a "pass" grade are currently acceptable through the Individual Evaluation pathway, if the institution has a legend on its transcript indicating that a passing grade is at least a C for undergraduate courses and at least a B- for graduate courses¹. Some institutions do not have grading policies that meet these letter grade thresholds for a "pass" grade, or do not equate a "pass" grade to a letter grade at all.

In response to the COVID-19 crisis, **the Department will allow any undergraduate or graduate level content core or pedagogical core course, completed during the Spring, Summer, or Fall 2020 terms with a "pass" grade, or its equivalent, to count towards the content core or pedagogical core semester hour requirements for certification through the Individual Evaluation pathway.** The passing grade, or its equivalent, must be in accordance with the pass/fail grading policy, or its equivalent, at the institution of higher education (e.g., credit/no credit, pass/fail, satisfactory/unsatisfactory policy).

¹ The current minimum letter grade requirement, described above, does not apply to the general core (liberal arts and science) semester hour requirements through the Individual Evaluation pathway. A "pass" grade is acceptable for general core courses. In addition, any grade is acceptable, including "pass" grades, for the 12-semester hour graduate coursework content core requirement for the Professional certificate, as long as the college granted degree credit for the course.