

# West College of Education Exit Policy

## Fitness for the Teaching Profession and Counseling Out of Program

Admitted teacher candidates are expected to meet specified non-academic standards that are necessary to be competent teachers. The intent is to ensure that the students recommended for teacher certification are able to effectively and independently carry out the duties for which they are being prepared. The fitness criteria include personality characteristics, responsibility characteristics, communication skills, social relationships, and commitment to the teaching profession. Students who have been identified with a demonstrable discrepancy by one or more professors or cooperating teachers will meet with the Fitness Alert Committee to discuss options and develop a growth plan. The Fitness Alert Committee consists of three faculty members in the West College of Education appointed by a department chair. Failure to make satisfactory progress on the growth plan may result in denied admission to clinical teaching or removal from the program. In extreme cases, the student may be immediately removed.

## Professional Fitness Alert Policy and Procedure Policy

If any WCOE degree candidate demonstrates inappropriate behavior leading a faculty member to question the student's fitness for assuming a professional role, the professor will warn the student that said behavior is unacceptable and will document the warning/s. If the student's behavior and/or response to warnings do not demonstrate a change, the faculty member will complete the *Professional Fitness Alert Form* and inform the student of the following steps that will occur.

If a candidate shows an egregious lack of judgment suggesting lack of professional fitness, a fitness form may be issued without a previous warning. The five-member fitness alert committee is appointed by the dean and includes at least one representative from outside the candidate's department.

### Procedure

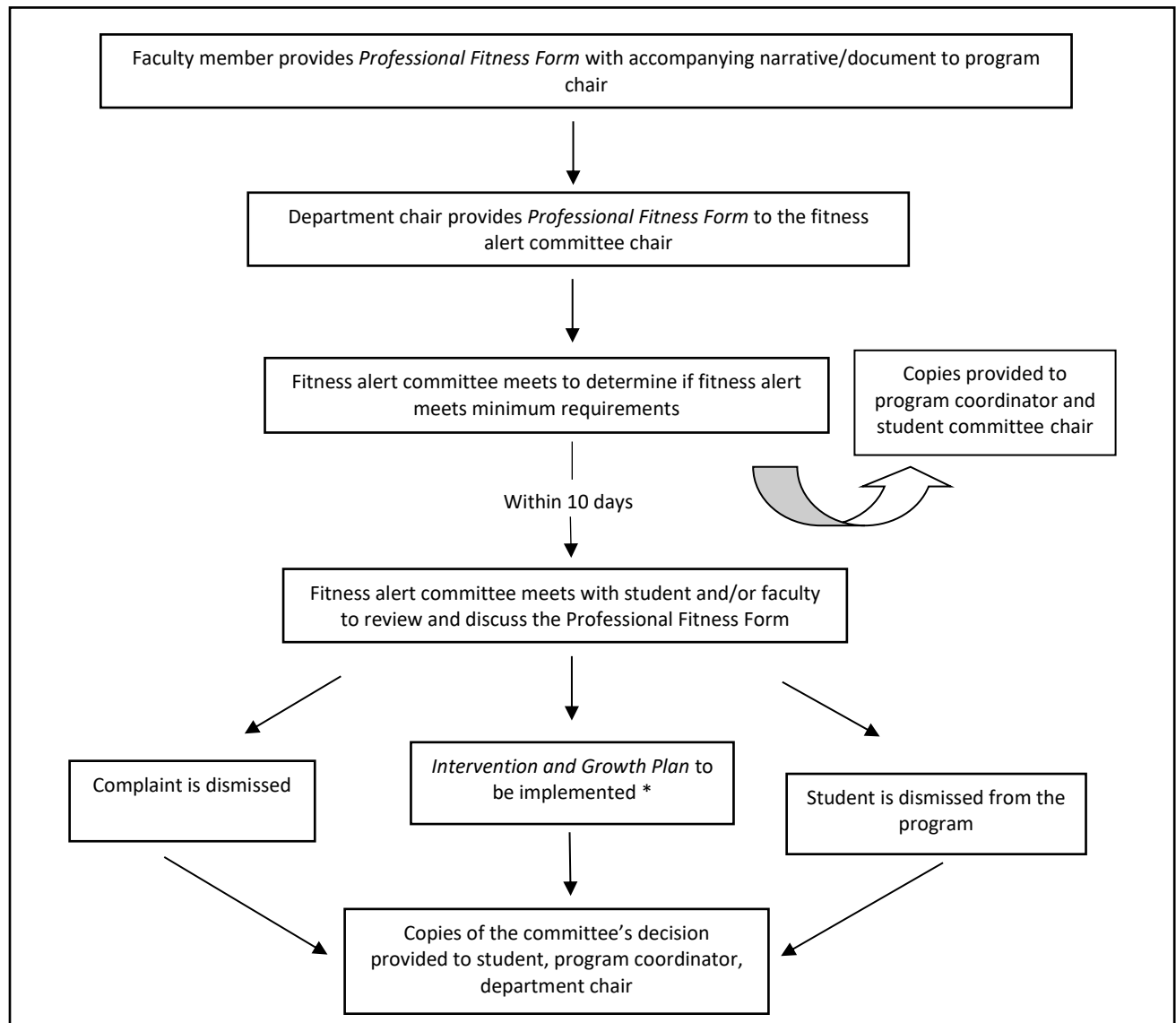
Issuing the Professional Fitness Alert Form requires the following action.

1. Professor issuing professional fitness alert form will attach accompanying narrative to document the situation or incident and give both to his/her department chair.
2. Department chair will give the professional fitness alert to the fitness alert committee chair.
3. Fitness alert committee will meet to determine if professional fitness alert documentation meets minimum requirements.
4. The student's program coordinator and the student will receive a copy.
5. Within ten days from the time the *Professional Fitness Form* was submitted, the committee will convene and meet with the student and the reporting faculty member.
6. The situation will be described and discussed. The committee can dismiss the complaint, issue the *Intervention and Growth Plan*, or dismiss the student from the academic program.
7. The student, the program coordinator, and the department chair will receive a copy of the decision of the committee.
8. During the intervention period, if credible information of continued inappropriate behavior is brought to the attention of the committee in writing, the professional fitness alert committee will reconvene to consider further action.

\*During the intervention period if credible information of continued inappropriate behavior is brought to the attention of the committee in writing, the fitness alert committee will reconvene to consider further action.

Counseling – candidates who have repeated issues with Fitness Alerts or concerns forwarded to a department chair, certification officer, or dean may receive counseling regarding the appropriateness of the teaching profession. WCOE concerns may be based upon the knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions outlined in syllabi and the conceptual framework, but may also include engagement in the profession. WCOE is ultimately responsible for the performance of its completers and reserves the right to determine who is identified as a WCOE teacher/educator professional.

**Procedure: Issuing the *Professional Fitness Form* requires the following actions:**



# West College of Education Complaint Process

## WCOE Complaint Process

In this policy, the terms "complaint" and "grievance" shall have the same meaning.

### *Other Complaint Processes:*

Stakeholder complaints shall be filed in accordance with this policy, except as required by the policies listed below. Some of these policies require appeals to be submitted in accordance with this complaint policy after the relevant complaint process:

1. Complaints alleging discrimination or harassment based on race, color, gender, national origin, disability, or religion shall be submitted in accordance with policy.
2. Complaints concerning retaliation related to discrimination and harassment shall be submitted in accordance with policy.
3. Complaints concerning identification, evaluation, or educational placement of a student with a disability within the scope of Section 504 shall be submitted in accordance with policy and the procedural safeguards handbook.
4. Complaints concerning identification, evaluation, educational placement, or discipline of a student with a disability within the scope of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act shall be submitted in accordance with policy, and the procedural safeguards handbook.

### *Notice to Stakeholders:*

The West College of Education (WCOE) shall inform stakeholders of this policy by information posted in the physical facility, on the website or, upon request, written information.

### *Guiding Principles: Informal Process:*

WCOE encourages stakeholders to discuss their concerns with the appropriate employee who has the authority to address the concerns. Concerns should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible level. Informal resolution shall be encouraged but shall not extend any deadlines in this policy, except by mutual written consent.

### *Formal Process:*

A stakeholder may initiate the formal process described above by timely filing a written complaint form. Even after initiating the formal complaint process, stakeholders are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their concerns. A stakeholder whose concerns are resolved may withdraw a formal complaint at any time. The process described in this policy shall not be construed to create new or additional rights beyond those granted by law or WCOE policy, nor to require a full evidentiary hearing or "mini-trial" at any level.

### *Freedom from Retaliation:*

Neither the WCOE nor any WCOE employee shall unlawfully retaliate against any stakeholder for bringing a concern or complaint.

### *General Provisions Filing:*

Complaint forms and appeal notices may be filed by hand-delivery, by electronic communication, including e-mail and fax, or by U.S. Mail. Hand-delivered filings shall be timely filed if received by the appropriate WCOE employee by the close of business on the deadline. Filings submitted by electronic communication shall be timely filed if they are received by the close of business on the deadline, as indicated by the date and time shown on the electronic

communication. Mail filings shall be timely filed if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on or before the deadline and received by the appropriate WCOE employee no more than three days after the deadline.

*Scheduling Conferences:*

WCOE shall make reasonable attempts to schedule conferences at a mutually agreeable time. If a stakeholder fails to appear at a scheduled conference, the WCOE may hold the conference and issue a decision in the stakeholder's absence.

*Response:*

At Levels One and Two, "response" shall mean a written communication to the stakeholder from the appropriate employee. Responses may be hand-delivered, sent by electronic communication to the stakeholder's e-mail address of record, or sent by U.S. Mail to the stakeholder's mailing address of record. Mailed responses shall be timely if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on or before the deadline.

*Days:*

"Days" shall mean university business days. In calculating time lines under this policy, the day document is filed is "day zero." The following business day is "day one."

*Representative:*

"Representative" shall mean any person who or organization that is designated by the stakeholder to represent the stakeholder in the complaint process. The stakeholder may designate a representative through written notice to the WCOE at any level of this process. If the stakeholder designates a representative with fewer than three days' notice to WCOE before a scheduled conference or hearing, the WCOE may reschedule the conference or hearing to a later date, if desired, in order to include the WCOE's counsel. The WCOE may be represented by counsel at any level of the process.

*Consolidating Complaints:*

Complaints arising out of an event or a series of related events shall be addressed in one complaint. A stakeholder shall not file separate or serial complaints arising from any event or series of events that have been or could have been addressed in a previous complaint.

*Untimely Filings:*

All time limits shall be strictly followed unless modified by mutual written consent. If a complaint form or appeal notice is not timely filed, the complaint may be dismissed, on written notice to the stakeholder, at any point during the complaint process. The stakeholder may appeal the dismissal by seeking review in writing within ten days from the date of the written dismissal notice, starting at the level at which the complaint was dismissed. Such appeal shall be limited to the issue of timeliness.

*Costs Incurred:*

Each party shall pay its own costs incurred in the course of the complaint.

*Complaint and Appeal Forms:*

Complaints and appeals under this policy shall be submitted in writing on a form provided by the WCOE. Copies of any documents that support the complaint should be attached to the complaint form. If the stakeholder does not have copies of these documents, copies may be presented at the Level One conference. After the Level One conference, no new documents may be submitted by the support unless the stakeholder did not know the documents existed before

the Level One conference. A complaint or appeal form that is incomplete in any material aspect may be dismissed but may be re-filed with all the required information if the re-filing is within the designated time for filing.

**Level One:**

Complaint forms must be filed:

- a. Within 15 days of the date the stakeholder first knew, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action giving rise to the complaint or grievance; and
- b. With the lowest level WCOE employee who has the authority to remedy the alleged problem. If the only WCOE employee who has authority to remedy the alleged problem is the WCOE legal authority or designee whom the complaint is about, the complaint may begin at Level Two following the procedure, including deadlines, for filing the complaint form at Level One. If the complaint is not filed with the appropriate employee, the receiving employee must note the date and time the complaint form was received and immediately forward the complaint form to the appropriate employee.

The appropriate WCOE employee shall investigate as necessary and schedule a conference with the stakeholder within ten days after receipt of the written complaint. The WCOE employee may set reasonable time limits for the conference. Absent extenuating circumstances, the WCOE employee shall provide the stakeholder a written response within ten days following the conference. In reaching a decision, the WCOE employee may consider information provided at the Level One conference and any other relevant documents or information the WCOE employee believes will help resolve the complaint.

**Level Two:**

If the stakeholder did not receive the relief requested at Level One or if the time for a response has expired, the stakeholder may request a conference with the WCOE legal authority or designee to appeal the Level One decision. The appeal notice must be filed in writing, on a form provided by the WCOE, within ten days of the date of the written Level One response or, if no response was received, within ten days of the Level One response deadline. After receiving notice of the appeal, the Level One WCOE employee shall prepare and forward a record of the Level One complaint to the Level Two Program legal authority or designee. The stakeholder may request a copy of the Level One record.

The Level One record shall include:

1. The original complaint form and any attachments.
2. All other documents submitted by the stakeholder at Level One.
3. The written response issued at Level One and any attachments.
4. All other documents relied upon by the Level One Program employee in reaching the Level One decision.

The Program legal authority or designee shall schedule a conference within ten days after the appeal notice is filed. The conference shall be limited to the issues and documents considered at Level One. At the conference, the stakeholder may provide information concerning any documents or information relied upon by the Program employee for the Level One decision. The Program legal authority or designee may set reasonable time limits for the conference. The Program legal authority or designee shall provide the stakeholder a written response within ten days following the conference. In reaching a decision, the WCOE legal authority or designee may

consider the Level One record, information provided at the Level Two conference, and any other relevant documents or information the WCOE legal authority or designee believes will help resolve the complaint. Recordings of the Level One and Level Two conferences, if any, shall be maintained with the Level One and Level Two records.

If the complaint WCOE employee who has authority to remedy the alleged problem is the WCOE legal authority or designee, the complaint may begin at Level Two following the procedure, including deadlines, for filing the complaint form at Level One.

*Complaints to the Texas Education Agency:*

If the stakeholder is not satisfied with the complaint process or outcome, the stakeholder may file a complaint against the Program with the Texas Education Agency. The official Texas Education Agency complaint process can be found at:

[http://tea.texas.gov/About\\_TEA/Contact\\_Us/Complaints/Complaints/](http://tea.texas.gov/About_TEA/Contact_Us/Complaints/Complaints/).

## Texas Education Agency Background Check and Criminal History

### ***Criminal Records***

In accordance with Article 6252-13c, Texas Civil Statutes, the commissioner of education may suspend or revoke a teaching certificate, or refuse to issue a teaching certificate for a person who has been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor for a crime which directly relates to the duties and responsibilities of the teaching profession.

All applicants for Texas certificates will be screened for a record of a felony or misdemeanor conviction through the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as of September 1, 1982.

Please refer to current [SBEC rules prescribed in 19 TAC §249.16](#).

### ***Criminal Background Checks***

Pursuant to the Texas Education Code (TEC), §22.083, candidates must undergo a criminal history background check prior to employment as an educator; and pursuant to the TEC, §22.0835, candidates must undergo a criminal history background check prior to clinical teaching.

### ***Notification of Criminal Conviction, Denial of Certification, and Criminal Background Checks Condition of Certification***

As required by Texas Occupations Code (TOC), Section 53.152, candidates should be aware that an individual who has been convicted of any offense, in any state, may be denied an initial or advanced certificate. By completing the admission process into an initial or advanced program, each individual is aware that even after completion of a degree, if at any point that individual was convicted of any crime, of any degree, he/she may still graduate from the program but may be denied a certificate by the State Board of Educator Certification.

### ***Preliminary Checks***

All candidates enrolled in an educator preparation program are eligible to request a Preliminary Criminal History Evaluation. A Preliminary Criminal History Evaluation is a non-mandatory, non-binding evaluation of an individual's self-reported criminal history. Information on [Preliminary Criminal History Evaluations](#) can be found on the TEA Texas Education Agency website. You may also refer to [19 TAC Chapter 227, Subchapter B](#) for additional information.