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.
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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:

1. Faculty member provides *Professional Fitness Form* with accompanying narrative/document to program chair.
2. Department chair provides *Professional Fitness Form* to the fitness alert committee chair.
3. Fitness alert committee meets to determine if fitness alert meets minimum requirements.
4. Within 10 days:
   - Fitness alert committee meets with student and/or faculty to review and discuss the *Professional Fitness Form*.
   - Copies provided to program coordinator and student committee chair.
5. Complaint is dismissed.
6. *Intervention and Growth Plan* to be implemented *.
7. Student is dismissed from the program.
8. Copies of the committee’s decision provided to student, program coordinator, department chair.
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.