Vermont’s Alternative Licensure Program
Peer Review
Program Handbook
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MISSION STATEMENT

Peer review provides a non-traditional licensure process for candidates who demonstrate proficiency in meeting the standards for Vermont educators. Peer review guides prospective candidates through this unique and rigorous process of licensure by evaluating and ultimately recommending licensure to qualified candidates. The peer review process recognizes that rich life experiences and diverse backgrounds, gained outside of formal teacher education programs, can be used to demonstrate the requirements for Vermont educators. This process encourages highly qualified and passionate individuals to pursue licensure to benefit all Vermont students.

INTRODUCTION

Most individuals wishing to become licensed as teachers or administrators enroll and complete state approved preparation programs. However, there are alternate routes to educator licensure in many states. Vermont’s alternate route is License by Evaluation or “Peer Review.” Peer Review is for individuals who have acquired the knowledge and skills needed to meet the Core Teaching & Leadership Standards for Vermont Educators1 (for initial licensure) and the requirements and competencies for the endorsement(s) they seek through coursework, workshops, and life experiences, rather than through a preparation program.

The authority for the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) to grant licenses through Peer Review is provided for in Vermont’s Rules Governing the Licensing of Educators and the Preparation of Educational Professionals, Section 5330.

5330 Alternate Routes to Licensure

5332 An individual who holds at least a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited or state-approved institution and who has successfully completed a major, or its equivalent, in the liberal arts and sciences, or in the content area of the endorsement sought, may be licensed by completing an alternate preparation process approved by the Standards Board. For endorsement areas requiring an advanced degree, the individual must hold the specified advanced degree in order to be deemed eligible to proceed with any other alternate preparation process approved by the Standards Board. (Licensing Rules 5/16)

This Handbook is designed to provide the prospective Peer Review candidate with the information needed to:

- Understand the Peer Review process and its expectations and requirements
- Determine if this route is the most appropriate pathway to licensure
- Gain a better understanding of how to prepare a professional portfolio that clearly and accurately reflects his or her knowledge, skills, and dispositions

1 “Requirements” are the conditions an applicant must meet (e.g. “…13 consecutive weeks of student teaching, or the equivalent…”.) and “Vermont Teaching Standards and Learning Progressions” refer to the knowledge and skills a candidate must demonstrate (The teacher collaborates with others to build a positive learning climate marked by respect, rigor, and responsibility.”).
- Understand the criteria the Peer Review Panel uses and the process it undertakes in evaluating the candidate for initial licensure or adding an endorsement
- Understand how to proceed after the Panel has made its recommendation

After reviewing the handbook, for additional information on the Peer Review process please contact: Wendy Scott, Peer Review Program Coordinator, AOE.PeerReview@vermont.gov if you wish to register for a required Peer Review Clinic, please contact Wendy Scott at AOE.PeerReview@vermont.gov.

**PEER REVIEW PROCESS**

The Peer Review process has five stages: (1) applying for Peer Review, (2) attending a Peer Review Clinic, (3) preparing the portfolio, (4) undertaking the evaluation process, and (5) acting upon the Peer Review Panel’s recommendation. While all candidates must proceed through these stages, the process is somewhat different for individuals seeking initial licensure (i.e., those who do not currently hold a Vermont license) and those seeking an additional endorsement (see page 14) to add to their current Vermont license. As you read this Handbook, please note which set of procedures pertains to you.

**Overview of the Peer Review Process**

**STAGE 1:**
- Apply for acceptance in the Peer Review Program in the Vermont Online Licensing System for Educators (ALiS). To apply potential candidate MUST submit a (1) current resume and (2) have official transcripts sent directly from the college/university AND (3) ALL Testing requirements (Praxis Core or Equivalent & Praxis II (if applicable) for the endorsement you are seeking must be complete prior to submission (effective July 1, 2017)

Peer Review Program cannot accept student copies. Request Official Transcripts be sent directly to the Agency of Education either in the sealed envelope in which they are issued or emailed directly to aoe.transcripts@vermont.gov.

The Peer Review Program Coordinator will determine a candidate’s eligibility. Applicant’s transcripts, etc. are reviewed. A letter informing the applicant of his/her eligibility status is emailed to the candidate along with a copy of the:
- General requirements
- Core Teaching or Leadership Standards for initial licensure (if applicable)
- Specific knowledge and performance standards for the endorsement area being sought
- Portfolio content checklist
- Professional attributes and disposition verification form
- Guidelines for panelists to evaluate student teaching experience rubric
STAGE 2:
Attending the Peer Review Clinic. Candidates must attend a Peer Review Clinic conducted by the Peer Review Program Coordinator. Clinics are held at the Vermont Agency of Education, 219 N. Main St., Barre, VT, 05641.

Attendees will be presented with an overview of the Peer Review process and have an opportunity to ask questions. Clinic attendance is mandatory and free. Attendance must be done within 12 months of submitting portfolio or you will have to re-attend.

STAGE 3:
Preparing the Peer Review Portfolio. Using the portfolio guidelines provided, the candidate addresses the general requirements and Vermont Core Teaching or Leadership Standards (if applicable), and the endorsement knowledge and performance standards and additional requirements, and assembles the documentation needed in an organized professional portfolio. Any questions on the process or competencies are directed to the Peer Review Program Coordinator. The candidate is provided with general advice, if necessary, as he/she goes through the process of preparing the Peer Review portfolio.

**Portfolio Submissions:** The candidate sends 3 copies of the completed portfolio, or emails the link and the $1,200 fee, and the portfolio content checklist, to the Agency of Education.

STAGE 4:
Initial Portfolio Review. The Peer Review Program Coordinator reviews all portfolios to ensure that the candidate has addressed the general requirements and Vermont Core Teaching or Leadership Standards (if applicable) and the endorsement Knowledge and Performance standards and includes:
- Portfolio content checklist
- Copy of clinic attendance certificate
- Copy of test score report(s) (exam scores must also be sent electronically to the AOE)
- Copy of transcripts
- Resume
- Student work
- Standards-based lesson plans
- Confirmation that the professional attributes and disposition verification form was submitted to Peer Review at the Agency of Education

The candidate is notified if any revision to the Portfolio is needed.

After the portfolio is accepted, the Peer Review Program Coordinator will assemble a panel of educators licensed in the endorsement area being sought. The panel receives the candidate’s portfolio and reviews it independently using the forms provided with the portfolio.

An interview is scheduled with the candidate. The candidate meets with the Peer Review Panel to answer any questions and provide any supplemental information requested or desired.

After the interview with the candidate, the Panel discusses the evidence and determines which general requirements and VT Core Teaching Standards (if applicable), and the endorsement’s
knowledge and performance standards and additional requirements. The Peer Review Program Coordinator serves as a facilitator to the Panel.

A Summary Evaluation of the Panel is written by the Peer Review Program Coordinator and approved by the Panelists before being sent to the Candidate. The Summary Evaluation details the determination of all competencies met and not met (if any). If a candidate is recommended for licensure a separate Recommendation Letter is included.

STAGE 5:
Informing candidates of the Panel’s recommendation.

The candidate is recommended for licensure: The Peer Review Program Coordinator will send the candidate a Summary Evaluation and Recommendation for Licensure Letter and upload a copy of the letter into the candidate’s Agency file. Information will be included in the Recommendation letter on how to apply for Initial Licensure or add an endorsement to the candidates existing license.

The candidate is not recommended for licensure: The Peer Review Program Coordinator will send the Summary Evaluation to candidate. This letter will outline which competencies were not accepted as fulfilled by the Panelists. Candidates, who believe they have additional documentation for the Panel to consider, can submit additional evidence in one email or package to the Peer Review Program Coordinator within one (1) month of their official written notification. Any additional documentation will be shared with the Panel. If the Panel then wishes to amend its recommendation, those changes and explanation for the changes will be documented and sent onto the candidate.

Candidates who agree with the Panel’s evaluation or whose additional evidence is not accepted can develop a Plan of Action detailing what activities will be undertaken to meet the areas which were determined to be “inadequate” in the Summary Evaluation. A Plan of Action must be submitted electronically to the Peer Review Program Coordinator within two (2) months of their official written notification. An approved Plan of Action must be completed within eighteen (18) months of approval.

If after the Panel’s reconsideration, the candidate believes the process was not followed correctly or the judgments were somehow biased, the candidate can appeal to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE).


STAGE 1: Applying to Peer Review

In order to be considered for Peer Review, all prospective applicants must hold a minimum of a baccalaureate degree (with the exception of the Career and Technical Education endorsement, which requires an Associate’s degree) or, if the endorsement area requires it, the specified advanced degree. ALL Testing requirements (Praxis Core or Equivalent & Praxis II (if applicable) for the endorsement you are seeking must be complete prior to submission (effective July 1, 2017)

If you meet these requirement, you should first read this handbook and the requirements and competencies of the license and/or endorsement you seek. If after doing so you are reasonably certain that you meet the requirements and competencies, begin the application process by applying for the Peer Review program in our Online System (ALiS).

- If you are seeking initial licensure you will need to log on and click “apply for new license” from the menu. Select NO to all the Preliminary Questions. You will then be prompted to select the Alternate Route you are pursuing. Choose Peer Review and complete the application.
- If you are seeking an additional endorsement you will need to log on and click “add new endorsement” from the menu. Select Peer Review as your route and complete the application.

The requirements for acceptance into the Peer Review program are the same for all individuals, regardless of whether they are seeking initial licensure or an additional endorsement.

Your application will be reviewed to determine your eligibility for Peer Review. You will receive a letter of eligibility via email informing you of the decision. Attached with the letter, if determined eligible, will be a copy of the:

- Peer review portfolio checklist
- General requirements and VT Core Teaching Standards for initial licensure (if applicable)
- Knowledge and Performance standards for the specific endorsement area being sought
- Professional Attributes and Disposition Verification form which must be given to your current or a previous supervisor to complete
- Guidelines for Panelists to Evaluate Student Teaching Experience rubric to assist you in understanding how panelists will determine whether or not you have met initial licensure general requirement #3 (student teaching)

Educator Testing Requirements

It is a requirement that candidates successfully meet Vermont’s passing scores for each appropriate test prior to submitting an application. Evidence of passing exam scores should be sent electronically to the Agency of Education AND included in the candidate’s portfolio.

Praxis CORE: All candidates seeking initial licensure in Vermont must meet the State’s passing scores on the Core Academic Skills for Educators Test; in reading (156), mathematics (150) and writing (162) or submit acceptable scores on one of the alternate exams detailed in the brochure below.
**Praxis II:** All candidates seeking *initial licensure* or an *additional endorsement* in Early Childhood Education (Birth – Grade 3), Elementary Education (K-6), English (7-12), English Language Learners (PK-12), Science (7-12), Social Studies (7-12), Mathematics (7-12), Art (PK-12), Music (PK-12), Physical Education (PK-12), School Psychologist (PK-12), Modern and Classical Languages (PK-12), Middle Grades (5-9), Reading/English Language Arts Specialist (PK-12), Health Education (PK-12) must meet the state’s passing scores on either the multiple choice or constructed response versions.

For more information on educator testing, including costs, testing dates, and location of test sites, refer to [Vermont’s Testing Requirements for Educator Licensure](#).

**STAGE 2: Peer Review Clinics**

Attendance at a minimum of one Peer Review Clinic is required within 12 months prior to submission of portfolio *(Please plan accordingly)*. Clinics provide support to candidates who are considering Peer Review or who would like consultation as they prepare their portfolios. Attendees will receive an overview of Peer Review and the process, and have an opportunity to ask questions. Individual consultation will be available at the end (time permitting). Clinics are offered once every month. Dates are posted on the [Agency’s Webpage](#) and are held at the Agency’s offices at Barre City Place in Barre, VT. Clinic attendees are required to pre-register by emailing [AOE.PeerReview@vermont.gov](mailto:AOE.PeerReview@vermont.gov). There is no charge to attend a clinic.

**STAGE 3: Preparing the Portfolio**

A portfolio is an edited but significant collection of materials or artifacts that you assemble in order to demonstrate and verify that you possess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for meeting the requirements and competencies of the license and/or endorsement area you seek. It is the single most important component of the Peer Review process. It is through the portfolio that the Panel is introduced to you and learns about your experiences, accomplishments, and abilities. It is crucial that you approach creating your portfolio in a thoughtful, purposeful manner and take the time needed to ensure that your portfolio is a complete and accurate reflection of who you are as an educator.

The guidelines for creating your portfolio are presented in the next chapter and are discussed at the Peer Review Clinics. It is strongly recommended that these general guidelines are read, understood and followed. Be certain that you support statements on the quality of your work with documentation and evidence. It is important for you to know that an organized and well-written portfolio will present you in the best possible light. On the other hand, a portfolio that is difficult for the Panel to read because it is disorganized and has typographical or grammatical errors will do the opposite; it will adversely impact the Panel’s evaluation of your knowledge and abilities.

**Addressing the Competencies – Initial Licensure Candidates**

If you are applying to Peer Review to obtain *initial licensure* in Vermont, you must address the following:

- General Requirements for All Initial Licenses
- Vermont Core Teaching or Leadership Standards depending on endorsement being sought
- Endorsement Knowledge and Performance standards and additional requirements

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL INITIAL LICENSES

Requirement #1: Except as otherwise noted by this section, the applicant shall hold a baccalaureate degree from a regionally accredited or state-approved institution and shall have successfully completed a major, or its equivalent, in the liberal arts and sciences, or in the content area of the endorsement sought.

Requirement #2: Documentation of the specified content knowledge and performance standards and additional requirements, if any, for the endorsement being sought.

Requirement #3: Evidence of at least thirteen (13) consecutive weeks of student teaching, or an equivalent learning experience as determined by Standards Board policy or by the requirements of the endorsement.

Requirement #4: Demonstrated ability to communicate effectively in speaking, writing, and other forms of creative expression and ability to apply basic mathematical skills, critical thinking skills, and creative thinking skills.

Requirement #5: Demonstrated competency as specified in the following requirements (also referred to as the Vermont Core Teaching and Leadership Standards and Progression Indicators)

VERMONT CORE TEACHING STANDARDS (Link includes Progression Indicators)

Standard 1: The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

Standard 2: The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

Standard 3: The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

Standard 4: The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning
experiences that make these aspects of the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

Standard 5: The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

Standard 6: The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making.

Standard 7: The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

Standard 8: The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

Standard 9: The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

Standard 10: The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

VERMONT CORE LEADERSHIP STANDARDS (Link includes Standards and Functions)

Standard #1
An education leader promotes the success of every learner by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by all stakeholders.

Standard #2
An education leader promotes the success of every learner by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to learning and staff professional growth.

Standard #3
An education leader promotes the success of every learner by ensuring management of the organization, operation, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
Standard #4
An education leader promotes the success of every learner by collaborating with faculty and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard #5
An education leader promotes the success of every learner by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Standard #6
An education leader promotes the success of every learner by understanding, responding to, and influencing the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

*Note: Refer to p. 16 and p. 20 “Frequently Asked Questions” for a list of suggested evidence.

With the exceptions below, the initial licensure general requirements and Vermont Core Teaching and Leadership Standards and Progression Indicators must be addressed by all Peer Review candidates who do not hold a Vermont license. Candidates seeking initial licensure in the following clinical support areas do not need to address the VT Core Teaching Standards & Progression Indicators for Vermont educators: School Psychologist, School Social Worker, Cooperative Career and Technical Education Coordinator, Assistant Director of Adult Education; however, they must still address the General Requirements.

After addressing the “General Requirements and VT Core Teaching Standards & Progression Indicators for Vermont Educators”, if applicable, all candidates must then address the endorsement-specific requirements and competencies. Examples of student work, lesson plans and assessments are required in the portfolio.

Addressing the Competencies – Additional Endorsement Candidates

Educators who currently hold a valid Vermont license and are applying to Peer Review to add an endorsement only need to address the knowledge and performance standards and additional requirements of the new endorsement. For example, if a teacher is seeking an additional endorsement in Modern and Classical Languages, the teacher would only need to address the additional requirements and the knowledge and performance standards (i.e., the “competencies”) for the Modern and Classical Languages endorsement (see Appendix A.2).

Sending in the Portfolio

Once you have addressed all the requirements, VT Core Teaching Standards and endorsement specific knowledge and performance standards and additional requirements, and provided evidence and documentation to support your conclusions, assemble your portfolio according to the guidelines in the next chapter of this handbook. Be certain to include the following documents at the front of your portfolio:

- Cover letter to the Peer Review Panel
- Portfolio content checklist
- Copy of clinic attendance certificate
- Copy of test score report(s)
- Copy of transcript(s)
- Resume
- Confirmation that the Professional Attributes and Dispositions Verification form was submitted to Peer Review at the Agency of Education
- Copy of any relevant licenses (e.g., Vermont Educator License, Vermont Nursing License, Provisional License)
- Three letters of support from professionals who can attest to your work and knowledge. (NOTE: Must be on official letterhead and signed.)
- Student Work, Lesson Plans and Assessments

Submit three flash-drives of your portfolio. Be certain to keep your originals in the event the portfolios do not arrive at their destination. Also, the three copies submitted will not be returned to you once the process has been completed.

If you are submitting an electronic Portfolio a link to the Portfolio should be sent via email to AOE.PeerReview@vermont.gov and the payment mailed to the address above or paid online.

**STAGE 4: Evaluation Process**
The Peer Review Evaluation is a four-step process: (1) Initial review of the portfolio for “completeness” (2) individual Panel members’ assessments of the portfolio, (3) the interview with the candidate, and (4) the Panel’s summary and evaluation. Throughout all phases of the evaluation process, the members of the Peer Review Panel are responsible for determining whether or not the candidate meets the general requirements and basic principles for initial licensure (if applicable) and the endorsement specific knowledge and performance standards and additional requirements. The role of the Peer Review Program Coordinator is that of facilitator and resource to the Panel and advisor and resource to the candidate.

**Organization of the Peer Review Panel**
Once three copies or the link to your completed portfolio and fee are received, the Program Manager will review the portfolio for “completeness. If any revision is needed the portfolio will be returned to the candidate with explanation for the needed revision. Once revised, the candidate can resubmit their Portfolio. Once accepted the Peer Review Program Coordinator will organize a Peer Review Panel. Regulations (section 5331) specify that the Panel “shall include individuals who are qualified in the field of practice for the endorsement(s) sought.” Typically, members of the Peer Review Panel are currently licensed and practicing educators.

The Program Coordinator seeks to assemble a Panel that includes educators across the instructional levels of the endorsement. For example, if a candidate is seeking an endorsement as a K-12 physical education teacher, the Panel will try to include physical education teachers working at the elementary and secondary levels. In addition, the Program Coordinator seeks to maintain the impartiality of the Panel and ascertains if any prospective Panel member has any conflict of interest or personal experiences with the candidate.
Peer Review Panel’s Individual Assessments

Once the members of a Peer Review Panel are identified, copies of the candidate’s portfolio are sent to them along with the appropriate Recording Forms (refer to Appendix A) and the Guidelines to Evaluate Student Teaching Experience rubric (refer to Appendix D). Panel members are instructed to carefully read the entire portfolio and to use the Recording Forms and Guidelines to indicate whether the evidence presented is “adequate” or “inadequate.” Panelists also are asked to write any questions regarding a specific competency or piece of evidence that they wish to ask the candidate at the interview. This individual assessment by the Panelist is completed prior to the interview and Panel meeting.

A set of the Recording Forms and Guidelines for Panelists to Evaluate Student Teaching Experience rubric was enclosed with the letter of eligibility (see page 5). Candidates are encouraged to use these as a self-assessment tool prior to submitting the portfolio in order to anticipate any “gaps” or weaknesses in the evidence or narrative.

The Panel Interview

The Panel Interview is an opportunity for candidates to provide additional information, respond to the Panel’s need for clarification, and submit more evidence to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and dispositions. Although each interview is unique and dependent upon the endorsement sought, the portfolio, and the Panel, there are some commonalities across interviews.

1. The interview will last between an hour and an hour and a half.
2. The Peer Review Coordinator will read the Competencies and Standards and Panel members will ask questions they have regarding the candidate’s experiences, education, and/or evidence.
3. The candidate presents additional evidence or documentation. It is most effective to do so in the context of a response to a question.
4. The candidate will have an opportunity to ask the Panel questions at the end.
5. The Panel meets after the interview to discuss all of the evidence and determine if the evidence presented is adequate or not.

Stage 5: Peer Review Panel’s Recommendation

When the Panel Finds All Requirements and Competencies Have Been Met

Panel Summary: The Panel recommends to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Standards (VSBPE) that the candidate be granted a recommendation for licensure in the endorsement area sought.

The Peer Review Program Coordinator will inform the candidate, in writing, of the Panel’s summary and recommendation and how to proceed with application for licensure. If the candidate is seeking initial licensure, the Application for Initial Vermont Educator License and all required documentation (e.g., testing, criminal records check) should be completed in the

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3 Peer Review can only recommend applicants for licensure. Successful Peer Review candidates must meet all licensure requirements in effect at the time of applying for the license and/or endorsement.
online system and submitted to the Licensing Office for processing. If the candidate is recommended for an additional endorsement, instructions are given on how to apply to add the endorsement to their existing license.

**When the Panel Finds Not All Requirements and Competencies Are Met**

The Panel Summary and Evaluation will:
- Reflect the Panel’s assessment of the candidate’s knowledge, skills and disposition as demonstrated by the portfolio, interview responses, and additional documentation provided
- Be presented in terms of each competency
- Include the name of each Panel member and that they have verified the accuracy of the Panel Summary and Evaluation

Peer Review candidates receive a copy of the Panel Summary Evaluation with directions on what the options are for the candidate moving forward.

- **Submission of New Evidence to the Panel to Reconsider its Decision**
  If you believe that you can provide additional documentation or evidence that may change the Panel’s evaluation of any requirement or competency it found to be “inadequate,” it is incumbent upon you to contact the Peer Review Program Coordinator and submit the additional evidence (in 1 email or packet) within one month of your official notification. The Program Coordinator will send the additional evidence to the Panel, collect their feedback, and inform you of the Panel’s response.

- **Develop a Plan of Action**
  If you agree with the Panel’s evaluation or your additional evidence is not accepted and are still interested in pursuing licensure, develop a Plan of Action detailing what activities you will undertake to meet the requirements and competencies the Panel found to be “inadequate.” It is **strongly recommended** that you discuss what you are considering with the Peer Review Program Coordinator before you develop a Plan of Action. You have two months from the date of your official notification to submit a Plan of Action. Submit a copy of your Plan of Action to the Peer Review Program Coordinator via email. The Program Coordinator will send the Plan to the Panel, collect their feedback, and inform you of the Panel’s decision as to whether or not the proposed plan would meet the competencies cited. When the candidate has completed all of the activities described in their Plan, submission of evidence and documentation of completion must be sent to the Peer Review Program Coordinator. Candidates are required to complete the work in their Plan of Action within eighteen months of receiving approval of their Plan.
  Once it is determined that the candidate has successfully completed their Plan of Action, the Peer Review Program Coordinator will inform you in writing. You will receive the letter of Recommendation and next steps to licensure. The Candidate then completes the Application for Initial Vermont Educator License or applies to add the additional endorsement.

- **After Panel Reconsiders, Appeal Decision to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE)**
If after the Panel’s reconsideration you believe that the Panel did not follow “applicable procedures” or that the decision was unreasonable, you can appeal to the VSBPE. To appeal to the VSBPE, write a letter addressed to the Chair of the VSBPE (in c/o the Educator Quality Division) within 30 days of the Panel’s final decision. Explain the reason and grounds for your appeal in your letter. The Chair of the VSBPE will appoint a subcommittee to review the matter and recommend its findings and disposition to the VSBPE. You will be invited to meet with the subcommittee to present your case. The VSBPE can adopt the subcommittee’s recommendation, or issue its own recommendation.

Creating Your Peer Review Portfolio

This section of the Handbook describes what you should do to create your Peer Review Portfolio. It includes suggestions for collecting and selecting evidence, the format to use when addressing each requirement and competency, and how to organize your portfolio.

What is a Peer Review Portfolio?

A professional portfolio is a purposeful and reflective collection of documents and artifacts that provide evidence of one’s knowledge, skills, accomplishments, and learning. The purpose of a Peer Review Portfolio is to provide evidence of your knowledge and accomplishments as they relate to the initial licensure and/or the endorsement competencies. The portfolio is more than a record of activities and experiences; it indicates specifically how you met the competency and what evidence exists to verify that you have done so.

Getting Started

Step 1 – Study the Requirements and Competencies

Before you begin to write, read and study the initial licensure general requirements and basic principles, if applicable, and the endorsement’s additional requirements and competencies very carefully in order to fully understand the knowledge and skills each competency addresses. You will see that there is a great deal of overlap, especially between the initial licensure principles and some of the endorsement competencies. Note where the overlap is; you may decide to use the same evidence to address any competencies that are similar.

Step 2 - Collect Evidence

Using your knowledge of the competencies and requirements you need to address, begin collecting evidence. Collect evidence, artifacts, and documents that you believe can demonstrate that you have met the general requirements and VT Core teaching standards and Progression Indicators for initial licensure and/or the additional requirements and competencies for the endorsement. Evidence may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Transcripts of relevant coursework
- Student work and standards-based lesson plans
- Evaluations or performance reviews of educational work experiences
- Letters of reference
- Certificates of participation at related workshops and conferences
- Documentation of teaching experiences
- Documentation of conference or workshop preparation and presentation
- Samples of published or unpublished papers or articles
- Documentation of educational advocacy activities
- Participation in school-community partnership activities
- Participation in school-business/industry partnership activities
- Evidence of your creative work (e.g., pictures of your sculptures or paintings)
- Videotapes of your teaching
- Lesson plans aligned with Vermont’s Common Core Standards
- Documentation of integrated standards-based studies/thematic units
- Concrete examples of accommodations made for students with different needs/styles
- Student portfolios
- Documentation of differentiated student learning plans
- Grading/assessment policies and examples
- Evidence of use of computer technology in the learning and teaching process
- Documentation of feedback from colleagues and supervisors
- Documentation of participation on school-community projects
- Bibliography of research articles read, including critical annotations for each article
- Documentation of service on district, state or national educational committees
- Documentation of job-embedded new learning activities

Step 3 – Select Evidence

Of the possible artifacts you have included, select those which will best document how you meet the competencies. It is important to be selective - more is not necessarily better. Each requirement should be documented by more than one piece of evidence (typically 2-4 pieces of evidence for each competency) and each piece of evidence can be used for more than one requirement.

When selecting which pieces of evidence to use, ask yourself the following questions:
- Which evidence do I have available? Which do I need to locate? Which do I need to generate?
- Which are the most persuasive and offer clear evidence of my meeting the competency?
- Which can be used to address more than one requirement?
- How current is this, and does it reflect the latest ideas of best practice?
- Have I used as much evidence of student learning as possible to document teaching competence? (Attestations/letters should be used sparingly.)

4 It is a requirement that samples of student work and standards-based lesson plans be included in the portfolio. Ensure student confidentiality by deleting names and other identifying information from student work and assessments. If using photographs and/or videotapes of students, be certain to get the appropriate permission to do so.
Do I have enough evidence to demonstrate this requirement or competency? (One piece of evidence may not be adequate to document how you have met a particular requirement or competency.)

Once you have made your possible selections, begin to write to each competency. Keep in mind the recommended organization of the portfolio (see page 22).

**Writing to the Competencies**

Connections and reflections distinguish a portfolio from just a collection of documents and artifacts. It is necessary to articulate the connection between the competencies and your “internal” understanding of these competencies. In the selecting stage, you matched artifacts with specific competencies. This step in the portfolio-building process is where the thinking that led to that linkage becomes clear. In addition to explaining the connections between the evidence and your artifacts and accomplishments, you must reflect on how you have been affected by these experiences. Reflective statements will enhance the meaningfulness of the artifacts included in the portfolio.

**Format for Addressing Required Standards and Competencies**

The narrative for each has four major components:

- a re-statement of the requirement, standard, or competency being addressed
- the evidence that shows you have met the requirement, standard, or competency
- a detailed description of the activity or event that produced the evidence you have included
- an analysis and/or reflection explaining how what you have done meets the requirement, standard, or competency

Include the artifact (e.g., student assessment) or document (e.g., transcript) you have used to address the requirement or competency. Be certain to clearly label each piece of evidence.

1. **Re-state the Requirement, Standard, or Competency:**

   Begin your narrative for addressing each requirement, standard, or competency by writing it verbatim. Be certain to include the number of the requirement, standard, or competency as it appears.

   **Example - Initial Licensure:**
   **General Requirement #3:** Evidence of at least thirteen (13) consecutive weeks of student teaching, or an equivalent learning experience.

   **Example - Social Studies (7-12):**
   **Knowledge Standards #1:** Methods of historical and social scientific investigation and critical evaluation, including use of evidence, data, and varied perspectives in interpreting historical events and analyzing public issues.
Example – Early Childhood Education:
5440-36-KS&PS/PS1: Demonstrates respect for children’s diverse family structures, values, and traditions

2. Evidence:
In this section you need to identify the documentation that verifies the activity you described in the first section. Include the actual evidence in the portfolio unless it is impractical to do so. Evidence can be representational, such as pictures of student projects rather than including “bulky” student work samples.

One carefully planned source of evidence may be used to meet more than one competency. However, each competency must include a separate analysis/reflection section.

3. Description of the Activity:
In this section you need to describe what you have done to meet this competency. This section includes the details of what, where, and when. It is possible that one activity may be used to address more than one competency. In such cases, you may copy and use the same description for the two competencies.

4. Analysis/Reflection:
This section of your narrative includes your thinking or justification as to why the activity (supported by evidence) meets the requirement, standard, or competency. This is where the connections between the competency, the activity, and the evidence that you are presenting are explicitly stated.

ASSEMBLING YOUR PORTFOLIO

Organization: It is to your advantage to clearly organize and label your portfolio sections so the Peer Review Panel members can quickly and easily access all necessary information. Remember, if you are submitting your portfolio in flash drive format, you will need to send three flash drives. Label the outside of each copy with the date of submission, your name, address, phone number, and email address. Also indicate whether this is an initial license or additional endorsement, and the level and endorsement area sought.

Title Page: Include the same personal and licensure information as the cover.
Table of Contents - Be sure to indicate document location, section, and title.

Order of Presentation (Each portfolio contains two or three sections)

I. Introductory Section
    □ Cover letter to the Peer Review Panel
    □ Portfolio Content Checklist confirming required documents are included (see page 12)
    □ Copy of any relevant licenses (e.g., Vermont Educator License, Provisional License)
II. Addressing the Core Competencies (Applicable ONLY If you are seeking initial licensure)
☐ Narrative for each requirement and competency.
☐ For each narrative response, include the supporting piece of evidence. Be certain to label the evidence. Since it is possible to use one piece of evidence to document more than one requirement or competency, use tabs or hypertext in order for Panel members to easily locate what you are describing.

III. Addressing the Endorsement Specific Competencies (If seeking an additional endorsement only the endorsement competencies must be addressed in the Portfolio)
☐ Narrative for each requirement and competency.
☐ For each narrative response, include the supporting piece of evidence. Be certain to label the evidence. Since it is possible to use one piece of evidence to document more than one requirement or competency, use tabs or hypertext in order for Panel members to easily locate what you are describing.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How do I decide if Peer Review is the best option for me?
Peer Review may be the best option to initial licensure or an additional endorsement if you have both some coursework and documented experiences that address the requirements and competencies. To judge whether to pursue licensure through Peer Review, first become well informed about the requirements, principles, and competencies you need to meet, and what is required to successfully complete a Peer Review portfolio. It will be helpful to attend a Peer Review Clinic or discuss your options with the Peer Review Program Manager or with an educator you know. If it appears that you are not able to meet several of the competencies, you may be better off enrolling in a post-baccalaureate licensure program at a Vermont college or university.

2. Why is it required that the Praxis testing requirements be completed prior to submitting a portfolio?
Since Peer Review is a costly process, both in terms of time and money, it is wise to pass the testing requirements before investing in Peer Review. Passing scores on the Praxis Core are clear evidence that you have met portions of the General Requirement #4, “the ability to communicate effectively in speaking, writing and other forms of creative expression and the ability to apply basic mathematical skills, critical thinking skills, and creative thinking skills.” These tests are required to gain Initial Licensure per the Rules Governing the Licensing of Educators.

3. How long does it take to go through Peer Review?
The answer to that question depends mainly on how quickly you complete your portfolio and the outcome of the Peer Review Panel’s evaluation of your work. It can take several months from the time we receive your portfolio to the time you are notified as to the outcome of your review. Please keep in mind that March through August is the
busiest time for Peer Review and it could take longer for the process if you submit a portfolio during these months.

4. **Is it necessary that I demonstrate competence in each of the “Additional Requirements” for the endorsement area I am seeking?**
   
   Yes. If you do not meet one or more of the “Additional Requirements” (e.g., if you do not have a major in English which is required for the English endorsement), you must demonstrate that you have coursework and/or experiences that are equivalent to that requirement.

5. **Can I apply for two endorsements at the same time?**
   
   Although it is not recommended, you may. However, you will need to submit two separate portfolios and pay two fees. Each endorsement requires convening a Panel of educators who are licensed and have expertise in that endorsement area. One Panel cannot effectively evaluate two portfolios and two sets of endorsement competencies at the same time.

6. **Can I apply for a modern & classical languages endorsement for more than one of the language areas at the same time?**
   
   Yes. The competencies for this endorsement are the same regardless of the language area. A panel would consist of at least one panelist for each of the language areas. You would be required to take and meet Vermont’s passing scores on the Praxis II tests for each of the language areas.

7. **How does the middle grades endorsement differ from the other endorsements?**
   
   It is unique in that the endorsement can cover up to four content areas: English, mathematics, science, social studies. You may address any or all in one portfolio. A panel would consist of at least one panelist for each of the content areas. You would be required to take and meet Vermont’s passing score on the Praxis II test for each of the content areas.

8. **How long do I have to submit my portfolio once it has been determined that I am accepted into the Peer Review Program?**
   
   You have one year from the date of your eligibility letter to submit a portfolio. If you are unable to submit your portfolio within the year, you will need to re-apply for acceptance into the peer review program.

9. **If the panel determines that I do not meet all of the general requirements and basic principles, if applicable, and/or the endorsement’s additional requirements and competencies, how long do I have to submit additional evidence for the Panel to reconsider?**
   
   You have one month from the date of your official notification to submit additional evidence for the Panel to reconsider.

10. **What is my option if I do not have additional evidence to submit?**
    
    Your plan of action for meeting the “unmet” requirements, standards, and competencies needs to be submitted to the Peer Review Program Coordinator within two months of
11. Do I need to student teach?
Regulations state that anyone seeking initial licensure must submit “evidence of at least thirteen (13) consecutive weeks of student teaching, or an equivalent learning experience” (General Requirement #3). If you have not completed student teaching but have had a substantial amount of supervised experiences working with students in the endorsement area you seek, your Panel may determine that you have had an “equivalent learning experience.”

12. If I decide or my Panel decides that I haven’t met the student teaching (General Requirement #3), who sets up the student teaching internship?
You have the responsibility for setting up the student teaching internship and covering any costs associated with the internship.

13. Is there reciprocity for licenses obtained through Vermont’s Peer Review Program with other states?
That depends upon the state. Some states who participate in the NASDTEC Interstate Reciprocity contract do not recognize licenses obtained through any alternate routes. The best way to find out is to contact the licensing or certification office of the state in which you would like to work.

14. Does a Vermont license obtained through Peer Review look any different than one obtained by completing an approved program?
No, there is nothing on the license that indicates that the person went through Peer Review rather than an approved program. However, a review of your transcripts would show that you did not complete an approved program.