

**VSBPE**

**Date: Nov. 29, 2018**

**Item: Report of ROPA Review of Peer Review**

**ITEM:** Shall the VSBPE accept the report of the ROPA Review team and grant Conditional Approval to the Peer Review alternative program?

**AGENCY RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**That the VSBPE review the ROPA Team Report as well as the Rejoinder from Peer Review and determine whether to grant Full or Conditional Approval to the Peer Review alternative program.**

**BACKGROUND:**

The VSBPE approved a ROPA Review of Peer Review, which occurred on Aug. 7-8, 2018. The Review Team had several concerns, which led them to recommend Conditional Approval. Peer Review has submitted an official Rejoinder to the ROPA Report.

**RATIONALE:**

The rationale for not making an overt recommendation to the Board is due to recommendations dating back to 2002 that there should be a different review process for Peer Review.

**SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:** [ROPA Review Team Report](#), Peer Review Rejoinder



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## Vermont Agency of Education Peer Review Program

### Institutional Rejoinder to the Full Review Team Results Oriented Program Approval (ROPA) Site Visit August 7& 8, 2018.

We wish to thank the ROPA review team's time and effort in reviewing the Peer Review (PR) program. In particular we thank Ellen Cairns and Dr. Fuller for writing the report. The ROPA process is a substantial undertaking for all involved. We recognize the additional challenges faced by the team while reviewing the only alternative, non-higher education-based program in the state of Vermont. What makes Peer Review an alternative program as opposed to a traditional program, is that Peer Review is not an educator preparation program, it is a program that evaluates a candidate's documented evidence of experiences to meet required competencies and standards. We think this critical difference placed some unique challenges on the review team because the ROPA lens is designed to focus on traditional, educator preparation programs. We note that these challenges date back to at least 2002 in VSBPE documents. Upon review of the team's finding, we respectfully submit a rejoinder to the Peer Review ROPA report.

In the ROPA review team's report, the length of the conditional approval is unclear, nor does the report state explicitly what PR must do to move from conditional approval to full approval. The conditions are not outlined, and the stipulations are vague. Of course, Peer Review will be submitting a Seven Year Plan with much appreciation for the valuable insight and assistance the review team has provided. Many of the consideration and comments will be beneficial to the program. The Seven Year Plan will be based on the review team's report nearly point by point indicating what Peer Review will do to meet Full Approval.

#### From the Report

Peer Review is an alternate route to licensure which contracts with licensed educators who form a panel to determine candidate's qualification for licensure based on their prior experience and submission of a Vermont Licensure Portfolio. Peer Review does not prepare candidates, but rather assesses their previous preparation, which is usually not through a traditional educator-preparation program but through life experience. (ROPA Report, 2018, 1).

**Peer Review Response:** *The Peer Review program does not assess a candidate's preparation. A fundamental premise of the non-higher education based, alternate route to licensure, is that candidates demonstrate competence in required standards, through a myriad of rich and diverse experiences. This is a key attribute of the program. How one candidate demonstrates competency compared to another candidate differs. Panelists do not assess the candidate's preparation, they assess the candidate's evidence of mastery of the required standards and competencies both through their document evidence and through an interview process with the candidate.*

## From the Report

This is the third ROPA review of the Peer Review program since it has been housed at the Agency of Education. The team reviewed the Institutional Portfolio and interviewed current candidates, program completers, panelists, hiring administrators, and AOE personnel. The findings of this team are consistent with past ROPA reviews (ROPA Report, 2018, 1).

**Peer Review Response:** *While findings are the same, ROPA is also the same. In previous ROPA reviews of Peer Review, teams have been assessing how panelists assess a candidate's preparation, and not if the candidate is competent based on evidence. We respectfully submit that perhaps this is a large indication that the ROPA assessment process needs to be changed to better assess a non-preparatory, non-higher education based, alternate route to licensure.*

## From the Report

The question has arisen whether the ROPA review process is appropriate for Peer Review. It should be noted that the team adapted the language of some of the indicators so that the purpose of each was distilled and aligned with the Peer Review process (ROPA Report, 2018, 1).

**Peer Review Response:** *Respectfully, we find this particularly troubling. A program such as ROPA must remain consistent. By changing the language of some of the indicators the process was changed ad-hoc, in mid-stream without any notification to the VSBPE or Peer Review. ROPA must remain consistent from one review to another. In our opinion, if the team acknowledges limitations to ROPA with respect to Peer Review, as it did, the appropriate response would be to document those concerns for the VSBPE outside of and possibly in place of the Review Team's report with options for evaluating the Peer Review Program and a recommended timeline for that review.*

## From the Report

In addition, there has been some uncertainty about which requirements Peer Review needs to adhere to when recommending candidates for licensure (examples are the SLLA and the requirement for a Liberal Arts and Science undergraduate degree). The team commends the current Peer Review program for working to clear up these uncertainties and ensure that candidates are meeting all of the necessary licensing requirements (ROPA Report, 2018, 2).

**Peer Review Response:** *We are unclear about which evidence collected by the team leads to this statement regarding uncertainty.*

## From the Report

### Stipulations

Compliance with the requirement of candidates having completed an undergraduate degree in the liberal arts and sciences should be in effect immediately for any new candidates entering the program. (see Rule 5231 and Policy N8) (p.3)

**Peer Review Response:** *Respectfully, we think this is a misinterpretation of Rule and a misrepresentation of the current practice of Peer Review. Peer Review follows the VSBPE rule #5332 Alternate Route to Licensure, page 22. "An individual who holds at least a baccalaureate degree...who has successfully completed a major, or its equivalent, in the liberal arts and sciences, or in the content area of the endorsement sought,..." All Peer Review completers have either a major in the liberal arts and sciences or in the content areas sought or the equivalent as is demonstrated in the Peer Review, Institutional Portfolio. For example: the candidates who hold a Bachelor's of Fine Arts are accepted based on VSBPE rule "in the content area of the endorsement sought".*

## From the Report

### **Standard 1--Content Knowledge, Pedagogy, and Professional Dispositions Indicator 1.1**

**ROPA Team Concern:** The “Peer Review Attributes and Dispositions Verification” is used inconsistently.....Training is need to endure that the form is being used rigorously and consistently. Mentor Teachers should be provided with examples of evidence that they might look for in determining whether a candidate has adequately met each item on the form (ROPA Report, 2018, 3).

**Peer Review Response:** *The Professional Disposition and Attributes form changed in 2017 to a VLP based format with a proficiency- based rubric. Peer Review does not have contact with mentor teachers so providing them with training to use the form does not align with our program’s premise.*

## From the Report

**ROPA Team Concern:** Candidate are not required to write authentic lessons; some candidate pull together plans that are available through programs used in their placement school, or lessons accessed online. There is no clear process for assessing candidate’s lesson plans specifically (ROPA Report, 2018, 3). Candidates could be required to provide a full, sequential unit of study that they have implemented in a classroom (ROPA Report, 2018, 10).

**Peer Review Response:** *This is factually incorrect. Peer Review provides candidates with a lesson plan template based upon the VT Core Teaching Standards (IP evidence). Additionally, the new VLP requires evidence of a unit plan and five lesson plans (IP evidence). Peer Review Panelists assess on a case by basis through Panelists assessment of the portfolio evidence and during the interview process. It is not haphazard. Additionally, authentic lessons are supplied in candidate portfolios.*

## From the Report

Per mentor teachers we interviewed..... (ROPA Report, 2018, 3)

**Peer Review Response:** *We raise issue with this because there is no indication of how many mentor teachers were interviewed in this case. The concern is that this is vague, while significant, because no indication of how many of the total mentor teachers interviewed/asked this question gave a particular response.*

## From the Report

**ROPA Team Concern:** There was varying evidence in the IP and through interviews that candidates are meeting this standard based on their portfolio work. The team observed examples of candidate portfolio evidence for particular standards that would not have been rated as satisfactory by ROPA team members who rate VLPs as part of their professional responsibilities, yet were rated as “Adequate” by panelists. This speaks to the lack of training and inter-rater reliability for panelists. (ROPA Report, 2018, 3-4).

**Peer Review Response:** *It is our opinion that this concern should be redacted because it makes an assumption about inter-rater reliability based on another assumption that one who rates VLPs as part of their professional responsibilities is more equipped to rate VLPs than practitioners in the field rating other professionals. That is, while we fully accept that professional raters of VLP’s (college faculty) and practitioners (teachers/PR panelists) may, and probably often do, rate VLP’s differently, we do not accept the assumption that one does it better than the other. The larger issue that begs to be addressed with this concern, is that it is an unfounded assumption to suggest the quality of the eventual teacher will be better because his or her VLP was rated by college faculty or by teacher panelists or vice versa.*

## From the Report

**ROPA Team Concern:** One candidate interviewed showed limited understanding of central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) they are planning to teach and has decided to try to complete the Peer Review process a second time. (ROPA Report, 2018, 6)

**Peer Review Response:** *Peer Review candidates who do not submit their portfolios within the two- year limit can reapply to Peer Review, however, there is no “repeating” the process once a portfolio has been submitted. Plan of Action is required for those candidate’s whom panelists assess as not meeting the standards/competencies. This process speaks to the rigor of the program.*

## From the Report

### Indicator 1.3

**ROPA Team Concern:** There is insufficient evidence that candidates have designed and implemented researched-based learning experiences (ROPA Report, 2018, 5).

**Peer Review Response:** *We believe that this concern should be redacted. Peer Review is not an EPP so “research-based” in a misnomer. There is no requirement that PR candidates design*

and implement research-based learning experiences. Candidates must demonstrate they are competent by providing evidence.

## From the Report

**ROPA Team Concern:** Panelists have not been trained on the use of the VLP to score candidate work; the inconsistent scoring is a concern and was also noted as a concern in the 2013 ROPA report. In addition, panelists should be required to write comments when scoring a candidate portfolio. Some panelists consistently wrote in justifications, some wrote little to nothing. This would then be information that could be gathered for programmatic assessment and improvement (ROPA Report, 2018, 9).

**Peer Review Response:** *This is factually incorrect. The panelists have received training materials, exemplars and videos of interviews with the new VLP format as demonstrated in the IP evidence submitted. In 2017 Peer Review began the implementation of the VSBPE required VLP. The new VLP has rubrics, which for inter-rater reliability amongst panelists. The challenges associated with implementing a format geared towards traditional educator preparation programs were formidable. Still, we agree that further training of panelists is needed, but programmatic assessment is an EPP term and not relevant to Peer Review where candidates are not “taught” but demonstrate through experience if they meet the standards.*

## From the Report

However, the *result* is that the candidate was able to use items that were, at best, superficially related to the Standard or, for the letters, not at all. The panelists did not scrutinize the items thoroughly or provide detailed rationales for their scores (ROPA Report, 2018, 7).

**Peer Review Response:** *We believe this is conjecture with little consideration given to the interview process, which rounds out the portfolio process, and weighs heavily in panelist’s determination for licensure.*

## From the Report

### Indicator 1.6

In an interview with panelists, there was no consensus as to whether or not candidates provided adequate evidence for this standard.  
(ROPA Report, 2018, 8).

**Peer Review Response:** *As noted previously in the Peer Review Responses above there is no indication of how many of the total number of panelists asked this question during the interview(s) gave that particular response.*

## From the Report

### Standard II Systems of Assessment

**Concerns:** There is no evidence to show that candidates are informed that they have to have an undergraduate degree in the liberal arts or sciences, or in the content area of the endorsement sought (Rule 5231) (ROPA Report, 2018, 12).

**Peer Review Response:** *This is incorrect. Peer Review follows the VSBPE rule #5332 Alternate Route to Licensure; An individual who holds at least a baccalaureate degree...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. This information is provided to candidates in the mandatory clinic.*