

# Act 48 Approved Provider Guidelines

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**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA**

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

333 Market Street

Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333

[www.education.pa.gov](http://www.education.pa.gov)



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333 Market Street, 5th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333  
Voice Telephone: (717) 783-3750, Fax: (717) 783-6802

If you have any questions about this publication or for additional copies, contact:

Pennsylvania Department of Education  
Bureau of School Support  
333 Market Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333  
Email: RA-EDACT48APP@pa.gov  
www.education.pa.gov  
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## Introduction

Ensuring that all Pennsylvania children receive the high-quality education that they deserve requires an effective educator in every classroom. It is essential to have school and district leadership who are focused on raising achievement. Pennsylvania's educators – from classroom teachers to district superintendents – are the most important components of educational success.

As professionals in an ever-changing society, the state's educators are required to continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills, just as lawyers, doctors, accountants, and other licensed professionals. Pennsylvania's educator professional development law, known as Act 48 of 1999, describes the requirements that apply to certified educational professionals.

To further Pennsylvania's educational goals and comply with the law, all Act 48 continuing education guidelines shall be designed in order to improve the effectiveness of teachers in meeting the specific needs of the students they serve. Professional development must be based on sound research and promising practices of educator effectiveness, consistent with 24 P.S. §11-1123, and must be part of an approved plan for building educators' skills over the long term.

All certified educators must complete 180 hours of professional development every five years. The 180-hour requirement can be met with: six college credits; six credits of continuing professional education courses; 180 hours of continuing professional education programs, activities or learning experiences; or any combination of collegiate studies, continuing professional education courses, or other programs, activities or learning experiences equivalent to 180 clock hours. For the purposes of calculating hours and credits, one semester credit of collegiate study or continuing professional education coursework is equivalent to 30 hours of professional development and one quarter semester credit of collegiate study is equivalent to 20 hours of professional development.

These guidelines are intended to assist independent providers of non- (college) credit professional education courses, programs, and activities in completing the process necessary to obtain approval from the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE), as required by the Pennsylvania School Code (24 P.S. §12-1205.2(d)). Prospective providers must make a total representation of content in their application as part of the approval process. Approvals are granted for a period of three years.

## General Eligibility Information

### Eligible Prospective Providers

All entities or individuals that intend to serve as Act 48 professional development providers must seek approval through the application process contained in these guidelines. Eligible providers include:

1. Institutions of higher education for their noncredit continuing education offerings;
2. Professional associations;
3. Non-governmental organizations;
4. Nonprofit organizations;
5. Corporations, partnerships, and limited liability companies; and
6. Sole proprietors (individuals).

### Eligible Provider Verification Process

Apply using the exact proper name of the institution, company, or organization that matches the identity of the organization or firm as it is identified in its articles of incorporation.

1. PDE must be able to verify the identity of the applicant in the Pennsylvania Department of State's online searchable business entity database.
2. If the applicant is a foreign company (i.e., out of state), indicate the name and web address (URL) of the state agency that regulates business entities in that state so that PDE can verify the applicant's identity and incorporated/organizational status. If the applicant is a foreign corporation/limited liability company/limited partnership/limited liability partnership, and employees would be entering Pennsylvania to promote its programs or to offer training, the organization may not do business in Pennsylvania without filing a Foreign Registration Statement with the Secretary of the Commonwealth. To file a Foreign Registration Statement, a foreign company must file form DSCB:15-412 and attach a docketing statement DSCB:15-134A. Further Information and the forms required to obtain Foreign Registration can be found at the [Department of State, Bureau of Corporations and Charitable Organizations](#), North Office Building, Room 206, Harrisburg, PA 17120 – phone (717) 783-9210.

**If all the training to be provided by the applicant will be provided online, a Foreign Registration Statement is not necessary. Once the Foreign Registration Statement has been obtained, or once it has been determined that one is not necessary, PDE will be able to begin consideration of the application.**

## **Higher Education Institutions Applying for Approval of Noncredit Continuing Education Programs**

All noncredit continuing education offerings at individual campuses must be consolidated or bundled within a single application under a single point of contact. The institution bears overall responsibility for assuring that all its Act 48 professional development noncredit offerings in different component colleges, departments, or centers of study are rigorous, current, and aligned with the Danielson Framework for Teaching, consistent with Act 82 of 2012 (24 P.S. §11-1123). In each subsequent approval cycle, the single point of contact is responsible for submitting a consolidated application proposing renewal of any offerings previously approved that the institution desires to continue offering, along with any new proposed offerings. The designated single point of contact is responsible for coordinating the uploading of participant Act 48 professional development hours directly into PDE's Professional Education Record Management System (PERMS) for all component colleges, departments, or centers of study within the institution.

This responsibility is typically housed in one of three places under the institution's umbrella:

1. College of education or academic department of education responsible for teacher preparation;
2. Office of continuing education or the office charged with overall responsibility for the institution's noncredit continuing education programs; or
3. Registrar's office, especially if the institution offers any form of transcript for noncredit continuing education activities.

The single point of contact must be designated on the application, along with their contact information. PDE requires that the institution's president concur with the single point of contact designation.

## **Approved Offering Information**

The continuing professional development education program in Pennsylvania is a competency-based program, whereby professional educators may earn Act 48 professional development hours to maintain active certification.

Participants can only receive professional development hours for the actual time involved in the offering. No hours can be given when direct instruction is not taking place (i.e., registration, breaks, lunch, dinner, etc.).

## **Relationship of Offerings to the Educator's Area of Certification**

Act 48 (24 P.S. §12-1205.2(c)) requires that continuing professional education programs, activities, or learning experiences be "related to an area of the professional educator's assignment or certification." Therefore, applicants must designate which teaching certifications would be supported by the proposed offerings. [PDE provides a listing of the various certifications on its website.](#)

## **Additional Information and Requirements**

### **Act 48 hours for collegiate faculty involvement in school improvement.**

Accredited Pennsylvania institutions of higher education with PDE-approved teacher preparation programs have the option of uploading Act 48 professional development hours for members of their teacher preparation faculty. By awarding these hours, the provider enables those educators to maintain active certification in conjunction with, or as a condition, of their academic teaching assignments. If the institution desires to pursue this option in its Act 48 Approved Provider Application, the dean or department head must submit to PDE, on letterhead, a list of faculty member participants (full name, professional personnel identification number and the academic department in which each is employed), along with a description of public school improvement activities in which individual faculty members are or will be participating, and identify the school district(s) involved.

Act 48 professional development hours *can* be granted for:

1. Active involvement in working with public schools to improve student achievement;
2. Alignment of curricula with the Pennsylvania Academic Standards;
3. Alignment of instruction with the Danielson Framework for Teaching, providing professional development or induction activities for certified educators;
4. Improving the scope and quality of formative assessment; and
5. Use of interventions and safety nets for struggling students or similar activities.

Act 48 professional development hours *cannot* be granted for:

1. Paid consulting or activities for which faculty are otherwise compensated in the course of their normal academic assignments, unless such activities are considered in-service training; and
2. Supervising student teachers or pre-teachers.

### **Is PDE's approval always required?**

Local education agencies (LEAs) (i.e., school districts, charter schools, intermediate units, and area vocational technical schools) often engage the services of external consultants and organizations to provide professional development activities. Similarly, LEAs frequently send educators to outside training activities and recognize those activities for Act 48 professional development hours if they are consistent with the goals and objectives of their own professional education programs. An educator participating in noncredit continuing education offerings given by a provider that has not been approved by PDE can receive Act 48 professional development hours through their employing LEA only if the LEA agrees to upload the hours on the rationale that the offering is consistent with the LEA's professional education plan as it extends to the educator. However, many LEAs will only upload Act 48 professional development hours for their own professional development in-service programs, and PDE does not dissuade LEAs from taking a rigorous approach to managing and controlling their own professional development programs and in-service offerings.



## **Instructor Credentials**

All approved providers have the authority to employ educators, consultants, agencies, trainers, or others qualified to provide continuing professional education activities for educators in local school entities or other settings. Approved providers, as part of their approved provider application, must include a representation of their instructors' credentials and professional experience.

## **How is Act 48 of 1999 related to Act 45 of 2007?**

Act 48 of 1999 established the requirement that all certificate holders must earn 180 hours of professional development every five years from an Act 48 Approved Provider. Act 45 of 2007 (24 P.S. §12-1205.5) defines requirements for continuing professional education taken by Pennsylvania school or system leaders in specific covered positions (i.e., principals, assistant principals, superintendents, assistant superintendents, intermediate unit executive directors, assistant intermediate unit executive directors, or directors of area vocational-technical schools). To provide professional development activities that are creditable to school and system leaders under Act 45, an organization must first obtain Act 45 Pennsylvania Inspired Leaders approval. This separate application and approval process, distinct from the Act 48 approval process, is explained in the [PA Inspired Leadership Legislation FAQs](#).

## **Application Review and Approval Process**

Incoming applications are reviewed by PDE. Once an application is approved, that approval will be granted for a three-year period, although PDE reserves the right to revoke a provider's approval if the provider fails to comply with the requirements contained in these guidelines. If a renewal application is submitted at least one month prior to the applicant's expiration date, PDE may grant additional time beyond the expiration date in order to issue a critique and allow the applicant to submit necessary revisions to facilitate approval.

Applicants may receive a critique from PDE via email explaining revisions that are necessary to make the application approvable. Once the PDE responds, the applicant has 30 days to submit a revised application to PDE. If subsequent revisions are necessary, the applicant must submit them, through email, within 30 days of receiving PDE's response to the last submission. If a response is not received within 30 days, the application is closed out and the provider must initiate the application process over again from the starting point of initial submission.

**To request an application, email:**

**[RA-EDACT48APP@pa.gov](mailto:RA-EDACT48APP@pa.gov)**

**Please include your AUN number, Pennsylvania Department of State Entity Number, Entity Name, and that you are requesting an Approved Provider Application.**

## **Provider requirements once approved**

1. Providers must upload continuing professional education hours/credits into PDE's PERMS system within 30 days of an educator's completion of an activity.
2. Providers must maintain completion records for each activity for a period of seven years. Records should consist of, at minimum, the activity description, participant rosters with individual professional personal identification number, and evaluations.
3. Providers must provide individual participants with a record of the activity. completed and the number of Act 48 professional development hours earned.
4. Providers must conduct an internal quality review to ensure that all activities are updated based on participant feedback and advances in professional knowledge.

## Approved Provider Application Standards

In order to receive approval as an Act 48 professional development provider, applicants must satisfactorily provide general information and demonstrate that they meet the following application standards.

General Application Information: Includes contact information; applicant type; list of all activities; eligible participants by area of certification; and estimated number of participants per year.

- Standard 1:** Professional development activities have **clear objectives** for increasing student achievement and school success.
- Standard 2:** Professional development activities are based on principles of **adult learning theory** to engage educators in professional growth.
- Standard 3:** Professional development activities are aligned to at least one component of one domain within the **Danielson Framework for Teaching**.
- Standard 4:** Professional development activities are aligned with the current and applicable Pennsylvania Core Standards or Pennsylvania Academic Standards.
- Standard 5:** Professional development activities utilize a curriculum that is **based on research or best practice** and a delivery model that emphasizes **sustained, job-embedded professional development**.
- Standard 6:** The provider assesses participant proficiency through an **end-of-course assessment**.
- Standard 7:** The provider assesses participant satisfaction and impact on professional practice through **surveys of all enrollees** that are used by the provider for **continuous improvement**.
- Standard 8:** Effectiveness of the offerings is evaluated through **multiple measures of student achievement within the context of educator effectiveness** to determine impact on student learning, educator effectiveness and/or school performance.