



Early Childhood Higher Education Programs

July 25, 2024

Sarah Kondratuk
Northern Arizona University
801 S. Knoles Dr.
Flagstaff, AZ 86011

Dear Sarah Kondratuk:

Congratulations! We are pleased to inform you that the B.S.Ed. Early Childhood and Special Education program at Northern Arizona University is among the approximately 20 percent of early childhood education associate degree programs nationally to be accredited by the NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs, demonstrating commitment on the part of the program and the institution to high quality and continuous improvement, benefiting students, the early childhood education profession, and young children.

We appreciate your patience in awaiting this accreditation decision. Please know that the Commission examined all materials submitted within the Written Response to ensure a thorough review, and to provide detailed suggestions for how the program can continue to build from its strengths.

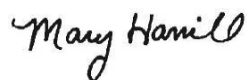
In response to your program's recent renewal process, we are pleased to inform you that the program has earned **Accreditation with Conditions** from the NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs. This positive accreditation decision is based on the Commission's review of the Self-Study Report, the Peer Review Report, and Written Response. The Commission evaluates the patterns of evidence indicating ability to support positive candidate outcomes in relation to the accreditation standards and offers feedback on program strengths and areas for consideration. Special attention is given to the use of candidate assessments and performance data to increase program effectiveness, capacity and innovation. The Commission would like to emphasize the positive nature of this decision, noting that approximately 75 percent of programs receive conditions, and approximately 95 percent are able to meet those conditions successfully within the first two Response-to-Conditions reporting cycles.

Accreditation is maintained through regular submission of reports and an annual fee; your reporting date is on the first page of the Decision Report that follows. Current fees and the report templates are posted at www.naeyc.org and in the [Accreditation Resource Library](#). **To meet continuous improvement expectations, the program must address the conditions listed on the attached Decision Report, in a first (and, if needed, second) Response-to-Conditions Report.** If conditions are addressed and removed, the program will remain accredited for the remainder of a seven-year term. (In particular: the program should plan to submit Response-to-Conditions Reports by **September 30, 2025, and, if needed, by September 30, 2026.** The program would also submit Interim Reports by **September 30, 2026** and (assuming conditions are successfully addressed) by **September 30, 2028**, prior to submitting a renewal Self-Study Report by **November 30, 2030.**) If conditions are not sufficiently addressed in either the first or second Response-to-Conditions Report, accreditation will expire according to the timeline on the enclosed accreditation certificate.

We encourage you to review the enclosed guidance document in considering how to address the conditions. We also host webinars twice a year for faculty preparing reports and have developed additional resources in the Accreditation Resource Library. As always, we encourage faculty to continue to use the online community website to maintain compliance with the accreditation standards, prepare reports, and sustain a culture of evidence-based quality improvement.

Please contact Pamela Ehrenberg, Director of Accreditation Services (pehrenberg@naeyc.org), if you have any questions or if we can be of assistance as you prepare to respond to the conditions. We are very pleased to include Northern Arizona University in the community of institutions sponsoring programs that have earned NAEYC Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs.

Sincerely,



Mary Harrill
Senior Director
Higher Education Accreditation & Program Support



Tiffany Hunter
Commission Chair

cc: José Luis Cruz Rivera, President

Accreditation Decision Report

This report presents the decision of the NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs.

Institution Name: Northern Arizona University **State:** AZ
Dates of Site Visit: March 24-27, 2024
Degree program(s): B.S.Ed. Early Childhood and Special Education
Date of Decision: June 2024

Decision: **Accreditation with Conditions**

Conditions:

1. (Standard D1): Ensure that collectively the program’s learning opportunities and key assessments address the competencies articulated in the Professional Standards and Competencies for preparing candidates for the ECE III designation.
2. (Standard D2): Ensure the program’s key assessments accurately evaluate candidate performance related to the Professional Standards and Competencies.
3. (Standard E1): Ensure the program accurately and consistently administers key assessments and collects and reviews candidate performance data from these assessments.

Rationale:

Note: For conditions related to key assessment (KA) alignment to the standards and/or rubric quality, the Commission has included examples of the concerns that led to the condition(s), but the program should review all relevant key assessments to consider revisions that would address the condition. When submitting its first response to conditions, the Commission encourages the program to submit revisions for all key assessments that are cited in the conditions so that the program can receive comprehensive feedback from the Commission.

The NAEYC Commission on the Accreditation of Early Childhood Higher Education Programs finds that this program demonstrates many strengths related to the accreditation standards. Some of these strengths are noted under the applicable standards below, and others are described in the Peer Review Report that the program received following its site visit. However, the Commission has determined that revisions are needed to address the conditions cited above.

The Commission wants to express particular appreciation for the program’s role in piloting new standards and reporting requirements. The Commission appreciates the pilot programs’ and peer review teams’ valuable role in clarifying requirements under the newly adopted standards.

The Commission offers the following rationale for the conditions:

Condition #1 was cited because across multiple standards, key assessments and learning opportunities do not clearly align with the “do” component. For example, within the learning opportunities:

- For 1a, candidates create a play plan, but it is not clear whether the plan is implemented;

- For 1d, candidates create a checklist, but it is not clear whether they will conduct the evaluation;
- For 2a, candidate are required to complete exams, which do not involve implementing what they have learned;
- 2c requires candidates to write a reflection and create a classroom management plan, but it is not clear whether the plan is implemented;
- Learning opportunities for 3c include a focus on quizzes, which do not involve implementation;
- 3d requires candidates to create a classroom management plan, but it is not clear whether the plan will be implemented;
- 4c requires candidates to create classroom rules, but it is not clear whether these are implemented with children;
- For 5c candidates create a plan, but it is not clear whether the plan is implemented.

Meanwhile, for each of the key assessments, candidates are expected to write a paper and lesson plan/unit which demonstrates the know and understand component of the standard, but the “do” component for the standards noted above is also not apparent in the key assessments. Key Assessment 6 is particularly challenging as the key assessment candidate instructions and rubrics do not include clear alignment with (or labels of) the standards or key competencies. Additional guidance related to this key assessment is found on p. 6 of this letter.

For Condition #1 to be removed by the second report, the program must:

- D1a: Provide evidence that the learning opportunities and key assessments address the cognitive demands (i.e., the “know”, “understand” and “do” aspects of the standards).

Condition #2 was cited because rubrics for all key assessments emphasize quantitative descriptors (e.g., language such as “one,” “two,” “less than 7,” “at least eight of the ten lessons,” etc.). For example, in Key Assessment 3, “two or less,” “three or less,” and “four to five” are used to distinguish candidate expectations across rubric levels. In Key Assessment 4, in addition to “one or no examples” (“approaches” for 1a and 1c), this performance level for 2c notes that the “rationale paper includes ‘some’ benefits of play.” The Commission also noted a couple of places where vague/subjective language was used to define the performance level necessary to meet the standard—notably, where 1a is measured in Key Assessment 1 (SSR, p. 135) where meeting the standard requires that the paper reflects adequate knowledge, as well as in Key Assessment 3 where “adequate” equates to “meets.”

For Condition #2 to be removed by the second report, the program must:

- D2a: Provide evidence that objective, qualitative descriptions of candidate performance expectations for meeting and not meeting the Professional Standards and Competencies are emphasized in the key assessments.

Condition #3 was cited because although faculty review data informally, a system to regularly collect and house data related to the key competencies and standards is not yet in place, which makes it challenging to regularly examine the data for program improvement. In the Self-Study Report (p. 67), the program states that they are working on a systematic way to access data from the key assessments to determine where missing pieces or redundancies exist in learning opportunities as well as key assessments throughout the program of study. As noted elsewhere in the report, the program has access to strong data collection and aggregation systems available through the Professional Education Programs office, which should be helpful in this regard.

For Condition 3 to be removed by the second report, the program must:

- E1d: Provide evidence the program has a dependable system to collect and house the data.

First Response-to-Conditions Report Due: September 30, 2025

Accreditation Decision Report: The Accreditation Standards

Nationally accredited programs must substantially meet the Accreditation Standards through evidence provided in the Self-Study Report and Peer Review Team site visit. The accreditation decision is based on evidence that the program meets the Accreditation Standards through four indicators: documented learning opportunities, key assessments, data on candidate performance on key assessments, and use of that data to improve the program in relation to the accreditation standards. (NAEYC Early Childhood Higher Education Accreditation Handbook, p. 37, 60).

Notable strengths in relation to Accreditation Standards A, B, C, and/or F:

- Candidate enrollment is diverse, reflecting the program's efforts in recruiting a diverse population of candidates to align with the demographics of the children served. Also, the program recruits and hires diverse faculty (SSR, p. 26).
- Candidates have access to both academic and non-academic supports such as the writing center, cultural center, mental health center, and urgent care.
- The program involves faculty in the development of policies, curriculum, and program decisions in meaningful ways through regular monthly meetings and program faculty meetings (SSR, p. 15). In addition, faculty have appropriate preparation, work assignments, and opportunities to engage in professional development (pp. 27-28).

Notable strengths in relation to the Professional Standards and Competencies as addressed through Accreditation Standards D and E:

- The program includes strong candidate learning objectives and program goals that the program uses to support candidate development and learning (SSR, p. 37).
- Strong data collection and aggregation systems available to the College of Education through the Professional Education Programs office; these will hopefully be helpful to the program in addressing Condition #3.
- The program has many partnerships with schools in the Flagstaff area to ensure robust field experiences that encompass preschool, K-2 elementary, and special education sites.

Note: The Commission recognizes the many strengths highlighted by this accreditation process beyond those specifically listed here. Additional strengths have been noted in the Peer Review Report.

Suggested Areas for Consideration:

The Commission acknowledges the effort the program has shown in transitioning to the new standards; the following are offered as areas for consideration in the program's next steps forward:

- In the overview chart (Self-Study Report, p. 119) and the description of Key Assessment 6 (Self-Study Report, p. 167), the program identified all standards as aligned with this key assessment; however, clear alignment was not found within the instructions or the rubrics. The instructions include technical directions and expectations for how candidates are to complete, score, and submit the rubric of the key assessment. The rubric serves a dual purpose as the academic and pedagogical directions, requiring candidates to assess their own teaching performance during elementary student teaching. Both the instructions and rubrics include labels for InTASC and CEC standards, but not NAEYC standards. The program is strongly encouraged to review the document "Using Candidate Observations as Key Assessments" in the Accreditation Resource Library. If it is determined that this assignment may not be meeting the program's needs as a key assessment, the program is encouraged to consider continuing to use the assignment in its current form to meet other program/institutional needs (and consider listing it as a learning opportunity for accreditation purposes), while designating a different assignment as Key Assessment 6.

- The Commission noted that key competencies are distributed unevenly across the six key assessments: seven key competencies are assessed only one time in KA 6, aligning a considerable number of key competencies within one key assessment, in addition to four key competencies are assessed only one time in other key assessments.
- As cited in NAEYC’s Creating Strong Key Assessments guidance document: while strong key assessments do typically measure more than one standard, each key assessment should focus only on the standards/key competencies in which alignment is the strongest. It is recommended that collectively, the key assessments measure each key competency two to three times to maximize opportunity for aligning to the standards. As a result:
 - While not required, typically each key assessment measures two to three standards. Programs may align to more, but recognize that doing so may make data collection and analysis more complicated.
 - Programs are encouraged to avoid relying on a single key assessment as the sole source of evidence for meeting any particular standard/key competency. Limiting opportunities to demonstrate alignment to a standard too much can result in gaps if the Commission does not see strong alignment to that standard/key competency in the identified key assessment.
- Avoid clustering of key competencies within instructions. For example, in KA 3, multiple key competencies are clustered together at the top of p. 140.
- It is recommended to double-check the titles for key assessments. For example, in the chart on p. 119 of the Self-Study Report:
 - a title is not listed for KA 2;
 - the title for KA 3 is “Signature assignment: mini research papers,” which does not reflect the assignment; and
 - the title for KA 6 does not reflect the title presented on the key assessment itself.
- Similarly, the program should ensure that the key competencies identified within the overview chart and the charts presented before each key assessment are accurately aligned with the key competencies presented within the instructions and rubrics. For example, in KA 2, Key Competency 1d is listed on p. 130 but not on p. 119.
- When addressing Condition #2, the program is encouraged to be mindful of differences between different performance levels that fall below expectations for the standards. For example, in KA 1, the rubric line for 1c (SSR, p. 126) indicates that “does not meet” reflects that the candidate has not addressed questions, while “approaches” reflects that the paper and lesson do not demonstrate the use of...”; in KA 5, in the rubric line for 3b, “approaches” includes: data is not used to inform planning. While these will not affect the program data in terms of meeting vs. not meeting the standard, the program is encouraged to ensure that all performance levels within a rubric are clearly distinguished.
- Additionally, in some cases, the “met” rating level on rubrics require candidates to partially rather than fully meet the proficiencies outlined in the standards. For example, where Key Competency 2a is measured in Key Assessment 1, candidates are allowed to submit a partial list as a “meets” requirements.
- For many of the KAs, the required age group and type of setting to successfully complete the assignment is not clearly identified. Doing so will provide additional evidence that all candidates have opportunities in field experiences to observe and practice with at least two of three age groups [infant/toddler, preschool age, and early elementary (through third grade)].

Reporting Expectations:

The following conditions must be addressed in the first Response-to-Conditions Report and must be met by the second Response-to-Conditions Report in order to continue accreditation:

1. (Standard D1): Ensure that collectively the program’s learning opportunities and key assessments address the competencies articulated in the Professional Standards and Competencies for preparing candidates for the ECE III designation.
2. (Standard D2): Ensure the program’s key assessments accurately evaluate candidate performance related to the Professional Standards and Competencies.
3. (Standard E1): Ensure the program accurately and consistently administers key assessments and collects and reviews candidate performance data from these assessments.

Report Due Dates:

Report	Due Date
First Response to Conditions	September 30, 2025
Second Response to Conditions (if needed)	September 30, 2026
Year 2 Interim Report	September 30, 2026
Year 4 Interim Report	September 30, 2028
Renewal Self-Study Report	November 30, 2030