Educator Licensure Changes FAQ

On April 24, 2020, Governor Pritzker signed Executive Order Executive Order 2020-31. The executive order provides relief on various licensure requirements including those candidates who were to complete student teaching, internships, required exams, among other requirement during the spring 2020 semester. ISBE filed companion emergency rules on April 27, 2020. This document provides additional clarity to candidates in educator licensure programs, individuals who wish to obtain a paraprofessional license, educators from other states who are seeking licensure in Illinois and practicing educators whose credentials are expiring June 30, 2020.

1. Who is eligible for the edTPA exemption?

Individuals who completed all other aspects of the program (excluding student teaching) during the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations are eligible to receive the professional educator license without passing the edTPA. To qualify for this exemption, a teacher candidate is unable to complete the edTPA due to COVID-19 related school closures and is entitled by the institution of higher education prior to the lifting of the disaster proclamation.

2. Who is eligible for the student teaching exemption?

Individuals who completed all other aspects of the program (excluding the edTPA) during the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations are eligible to receive the professional educator license without completing student teaching. To qualify for this exemption, a teacher candidate is unable to complete student teaching successfully due to COVID-19 related school closures. Teacher candidates must fulfill all institutional and programmatic requirements to graduate, and institutions of higher education retain the authority to determine if a candidate successfully completes their licensure program.

3. Who is eligible for the exemption for school support personnel and administrative program internships?

Individuals who completed all other aspects of the program during the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations are eligible to receive the professional educator license without completing the hours of internship required by Illinois Administrative Code. To qualify for this exemption, a candidate is unable to complete the requisite internship hours due to COVID-19 related school closures.
4. **How is licensure renewal impacted for educators whose licenses are due to be renewed by June 30, 2020?**

There is no change to this requirement due to Executive Order 2020-31. Individuals whose licenses are due for renewal on June 30, 2020 should make every effort to renew their licenses by that date. ISBE already offers educators a two-month grace period for licensure renewal. Licenses, in order not to lapse, must be renewed by August 31, 2020. Individuals who are scheduled to renew their licenses by June 30, 2020 and who already completed required professional development should log into their ELIS accounts and renew their licenses as soon as possible. Note: the above timelines are not applicable to holders of substitute teaching licenses and licenses endorsed for paraprofessional.

Educators still in need of professional development hours or administrator academies should work with their districts, Regional Office of Educations, or other approved providers to identify online professional development opportunities. Professional development activities completed online through out-of-state entities are acceptable for use toward renewal requirements if approved by one of the aforementioned entities.

5. **Do educators who hold an approval that is due to expire on June 30, 2020 receive an extension?**

If the emergency proclamations are extended past June 30, 2020, ISBE will extend the validity of the interim sign language approval, short-term approval, and short-term emergency approval on July 1, 2020. The approval will be automatically extended and individuals do not need to contact ISBE to receive the extension. During this one-year extension, educators must successfully complete the applicable content test. To be eligible for the extension, educators will meet all requirements for the full endorsement (or in the case of the interim sign language approval, the full sign language approval) excluding the test.

6. **Explain the content test exemption for entry into student teaching, and alternative educator preparation programs.**

During the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations, candidates who enter alternative licensure programs or beginning student teaching or an internship shall be required to pass the content test prior to receiving the professional educator license and not prior to student teaching or program entry.

7. **Explain the content test exemption for individuals currently in school support personnel and administrative programs.**

Candidates in schools support personnel and administrative preparation programs are required to successfully complete the content test prior to licensure. During the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations, candidates who would otherwise complete school support personnel or administrator preparation programs except for the content exam will
receive a short-term approval during which time they must successfully complete the exam in order to receive the applicable endorsement of their PEL. The short-term approval is not renewable and requires a $50 application fee. During the validity period, educators should complete the content test and earn the professional educator license endorsed in the applicable school support personnel or administrative area.

8. **Will ISBE honor licensure coursework grades that are lower than a C-, and will ISBE honor grades of “pass” or “credit” for licensure credential issuance?**

Yes. Acknowledging that many Illinois colleges and universities offered students the option to receive credit or no credit using a variety of grading scales, and that the threshold for “pass” or “credit” differs from school to school, the requirement that all coursework used toward licensure must be earned with a “C-“ or higher will be temporarily lifted for candidates entitled for licensure by an Illinois institution of higher education during the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations.

9. **What options are available for individuals who completed all necessary coursework for a subsequent teaching endorsement but are unable to complete the required content test due to testing site closures?**

Individuals who are currently licensed as a teacher (or are planning to concurrently receive initial licensure at the same time as completing subsequent endorsement requirements) are eligible for a short-term approval if they completed all coursework requirements for the endorsement but are unable to complete required licensure content test due to testing site closures. The short-term approval is not-renewable and allows the individual to be assigned to teach the content in the endorsed area. The application fee for the approval is $50.

During the validity period of the short-term approval, the individual must pass the licensure content test to be eligible for the full endorsement. Prior to receiving the subsequent endorsement, the candidate must either be entitled by an institution of higher education with approved preparation programs or apply through ISBE. Once the entitlement is entered into ELIS or the candidate submits appropriate documentation, candidates must then apply for the endorsement through ELIS.

10. **What options are available for individuals pursuing an ESL or bilingual endorsement who are unable to complete the fieldwork required for the endorsement or the test required for the bilingual endorsement?**

Individuals who are currently licensed as a teacher (or are planning to concurrently receive initial licensure at the same time as completing ESL or bilingual endorsement requirements) are eligible for a short-term approval if they completed all coursework requirements for the endorsement but are unable to complete all required fieldwork experience or the required target language proficiency test (only applicable to the bilingual education endorsement). The short-term approval is valid for three fiscal years and not
renewable. The application fee for the approval is $50. During the three-year validity period, the individual must pass the target language proficiency test and/or complete three months of teaching experience in an ESL or bilingual setting (as applicable to the endorsement sought) to be eligible for the full endorsement. Please note that three months of teaching experience waives fieldwork requirements. Prior to receiving the subsequent endorsement, the candidate must either be entitled by an institution of higher education with approved preparation programs or apply through ISBE. Once the entitlement is entered into ELIS or the candidate submits appropriate documentation, the candidate must apply for the endorsement through ELIS.

11. Are any exemptions provided to aspiring paraprofessionals who hold a high school diploma and seek to obtain paraprofessional licensure?

Yes. Individuals who hold a high school diploma will be eligible for a short-term approval endorsed for a paraprofessional educator (ELS-PARA). Before the validity period of this approval expires, the educator must pass the paraprofessional competency test and apply for the ELS-PARA. Doing so will allow the educator to receive the Educator License with Stipulations endorsed for Paraprofessional which is required to continue to work as a paraprofessional. Educators can apply for the approval in their ELIS accounts. The short-term approval is not renewable and requires a $50 application fee.

12. What flexibilities are being granted to individuals prepared out of state who are pursuing Illinois licensure?

There are two options for individuals prepared as educators in other states:

A.) The individual can obtain a license in the other state and submit a copy of it to Illinois along with an official transcript showing the requisite degree for the license sought. ISBE will award the comparable Illinois license. Provisional licenses that are issued in place of full licenses due to school or testing center closures related to COVID-19 will be honored during the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations with proper assurance from the college or university via an ISBE form designed for this purpose.

OR

B.) An individual can apply to ISBE for evaluation. The individual will be subject to the same exemptions as Illinois educators in the following areas:

   i. An exemption for the successful completion of the edTPA
   ii. An exemption for the successful student teaching and internships

The exemption is applicable only if the edTPA and student teaching/internships were unable to be completed due to COVID-19 school closures. The college or university that
prepared the individual to be an educator will be required to submit paperwork confirming that the requirements could not be completed due to COVID-19 related school closures.

The application fee for a professional educator license is $150.

13. Does the Executive Order mean that all candidates in educator preparation programs may be entitled upon graduation?

Executive Order 2020-31 allows the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to exempt certain requirements for licensure. ISBE continues to require completion of baccalaureate-or master’s-level degrees as a condition for licensure. Institutions should continue to implement their academic policies about satisfactory completion of course and program requirements in making determinations about eligibility for degree completion and graduation. IHEs retain the authority and obligation to evaluate candidate readiness and recommend candidates for licensure.

14. For how long are the exemptions valid?

All exemptions are only applicable through the end of Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations. For a candidate to apply and receive a license, institutions of higher education must entitle the candidate first. As the exemptions are only applicable through the end of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations, it is imperative that institutions entitle candidates as soon as possible after confirming which educators qualify to be licensed under the emergency provisions. Candidates are encouraged to contact their licensure officer to ascertain when entitlement will occur. Institutions that fail to entitle candidates during the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations will not be able to honor exemptions toward candidate program completion.

15. When should candidates who qualify for any of the exemptions apply for licensure?

For a candidate to apply and receive a license, Institutions of higher education must entitle the candidate first. As the exemptions are only applicable through the end of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations, it is imperative that institutions entitle candidates as soon as possible after confirming which educators qualify to be licensed under the emergency provisions. Candidates are encouraged to contact their licensure officer to ascertain when entitlement will occur. Candidates should therefore apply for their entitlement in their ELIS account as soon as they are able. Candidates who do not receive their license within one year will no longer be eligible for the exemptions identified in Emergency Order 2020-31 and emergency rules.

16. For what length of time are these exemptions in place?

The exemptions are in place for the duration of the Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations. Note: The Gubernatorial Disaster Proclamations are separate from the governor’s shelter-in-place order. Exemptions are not aligned to the shelter-in-place order.
17. Will deficiency letter expiration dates of 6/30/2020 be extended?

No. If an educator’s deficiency letter expires and he/she wishes to be re-evaluated for the credential, he/she may submit a new application in ELIS and receive an additional two-fiscal years to meet remaining requirements.

NOTE: ISBE will continue to monitor conditions related to COVID-19 and adjust policies and recommendations as needed. This document will be continuously updated. The agency will work with stakeholders and legislators to craft statutory and regulatory language that will support candidates impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Email additional questions to licensure@isbe.net.