



## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

DATE: October 9, 2018

TO: State Assessment Directors  
State Title I Directors  
State Title III Directors

FROM: Patrick Rooney  
Deputy Director, Office of State Support

SUBJECT: Update on the U.S. Department's Peer Review Process for the 2018-2019 School Year

This memorandum outlines several updates to the U.S. Department of Education's (ED's) assessment peer review process under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), including information about the peer review process, the timeline for reviews in 2019, and a call for additional external peer reviewers to support this important work.

### **Updated Peer Review Process**

First, I am pleased to announce that on September 24, 2018, ED released an updated [State's Guide to the U.S. Department of Education's Assessment Peer Review Process](#). This document outlines the criteria and process for demonstrating that a statewide assessment system meets the requirements of the ESEA. The updated guide, which outlines and supports the ED's peer review process conducted using panels of external educators and assessment experts. This document was released for public comment in July 2018 and revised based on the comments received.

While most of the requirements for State assessment systems were unchanged with the passage of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), there are a few new components. This updated guide incorporates the new requirements. A detailed description of the new ESSA requirements for assessments may be found on pages 6-8 of the document. The updated assessment peer review document includes: (1) information about the peer review process that ED will follow to review each State's assessment system; (2) instructions for preparing evidence for submission; and (3) examples of evidence for addressing each critical element.

The following assessments must be submitted for peer review under ESEA section 1111(a)(4):

- General mathematics and reading/language arts for grades 3-8 and high school;
- General science administered at least once in each of these grade spans: 3-5, 6-9, and 10-12;
- alternate assessments of alternate academic achievement standards (AA-AAAS) in mathematics, reading/language arts, and science for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities for the grades described above;

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*The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.*

- English language proficiency (ELP) assessments for all ELs in grades K-12;
- Alternate ELP assessments (AELPA) for ELs who are students with the most significant cognitive disabilities in grades K-12;
- If applicable, locally selected, nationally recognized high school academic assessments;
- If applicable, assessments used for the 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics exception;
- If applicable, content assessments in a student's native language for ELs; and
- If applicable, content assessments in a Native American language.

States need to submit assessments for peer review when there has been a major change (e.g., the adoption of new academic content or achievement standards; a new test design) in their assessment system (see pages 12-15 of the revised [guide](#)) within six to twelve months after the first operational administration of the assessments after such a change. Because the requirement for ELP assessment peer review was new beginning in 2017-18, all States will need to submit their ELP assessments for peer review in 2019.

### **Timeline for ED Reviews in 2019**

For 2019, ED has established two windows for assessment peer review:

- 1) In April 2019, ED will conduct the first peer review of English language proficiency assessments.
  - States submitting for this review must submit documentation to the Department by **mid-March 2019**.
  - All States are expected to submit for this peer review.
- 2) In August 2019, ED will conduct a peer review of general assessments.
  - ED is still finalizing the date for this review, so we will provide an update on when States must submit documentation for this review in the near future, but States should plan for a submission in **mid- to late-June 2019**.

Please contact your State's OSS program officer at OSS.[State]@ed.gov (for example, OSS.Montana@ed.gov) if you have specific questions regarding the schedule for assessment peer review.

### **2018 Assessment Peer Review Seminar Materials are Now Available Online**

I encourage you to review the revised guide carefully as you prepare for peer review. ED conducted a seminar on the revised assessment peer review guide in August 2018. The seminar was focused on the updated guide, including the peer review of ELP assessments. Panel discussions involved assessment experts (including many assessment peer reviewers) on a variety of salient topics. A complete summary of the seminar materials, including handouts, summary notes, participant list and video of all sessions are available [here](#).

### **Call for Peer Reviewers**

Finally, ED is again seeking experts to serve as peer reviewers and to ask if you would (a) be interested in serving as a peer reviewer and/or (b) consider identifying others who might be interested and qualified to serve as reviewers. Anyone who has provided updated application information to serve as a peer reviewer in recent months does not need to resubmit information now.

#### *Qualifications of Reviewers*

ED is seeking educators and other assessment experts to serve as peer reviewers for State assessment systems who have strong technical expertise necessary for reviewing State assessment systems and/or practical experiences in applying that expertise to the operation of State assessment systems. Each

assessment peer reviewer will be selected by ED based on the individual's experience and expertise, with an emphasis on knowledge of technical aspects of large-scale assessments, experience with the operation of State assessment systems, and relevant specialized expertise (such as developing accessible assessments for special populations such as students with disabilities and English learners, designing technology-based assessments, developing alternate assessments based on alternate academic achievement standards, scoring and reporting assessments, or reading/language arts, mathematics, science content knowledge).

In particular, since this is the first year that ED will be peer reviewing ELP assessments, we are particularly interested in expanding our pool of peer reviewers who have expertise in ELP or second language acquisition assessment development.

#### *The State Assessment Peer Review Process*

ED will train all individuals selected to serve as assessment peer reviewers prior to serving as a reviewer. A combination of onsite meetings (held in Washington, DC) and remote webinar conferences (one or more three hour sessions) may be utilized in each review window.

ED anticipates that the peers will receive access to electronic evidence documents approximately three to four weeks prior to the actual panel review discussion. A peer may be selected for one or more of the windows; a peer need not be available for all windows (and may express interest in serving in the future even if your schedule precludes you from serving this year). From the full list of all available reviewers, ED will create a panel of 3-5 experts to review a State's evidence documents. ED will work to ensure a fair and balanced panel for the review of each State's assessment system, according to areas of reviewers' expertise. Please be aware that the selection process for peer reviewers to serve on a panel for any particular State will include a review for possible, apparent, and/or actual conflicts of interest. Each reviewer on a panel will work individually for approximately eight to sixteen hours to review and evaluate the State's documentation in the weeks prior to an in-person or remote (depending on the review schedule) panel discussion. Peer reviewers will receive an honorarium for their time preparing for and participating in the review.

#### *Indicating Your Interest in Being a Peer Reviewer*

If you are interested in serving as a peer reviewer, please submit the materials outlined below to Donald Peasley at [Donald.Peasley@ed.gov](mailto:Donald.Peasley@ed.gov) with the subject line: "Assessment Peer Review" by **Friday, November 2, 2018**.

- A current curriculum vitae or resume
- A completed checklist of qualifications and conflict of interest form-see <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/saa/assessmentpeerreviewerchecklist.docx>

We invite and encourage you to share this call for reviewers with individuals who may be interested and qualified. If you have any question, please feel free to contact Donald Peasley ([Donald.Peasley@ed.gov](mailto:Donald.Peasley@ed.gov)) or Deborah Spitz ([Deborah.Spitz@ed.gov](mailto:Deborah.Spitz@ed.gov)). Thank you for your interest in helping ED with this important activity.