Industry-based Certifications
For Public School Accountability

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

1. **Why are industry-based certifications being included in the new accountability system?**

   - House Bill 22 (85th Texas Legislature, 2017) requires the state to account for high school students who earn an industry certification as one indicator within the Student Achievement domain of the state's public school accountability system. While hundreds of credentials are earned by public school students, the public school accountability system measures success in preparing students for valuable careers, whether through entering the workforce directly or persisting through higher education institutions. Industry-based certifications represent skills and learning that open doors and act as a springboard for higher levels of achievement to ensure students' independence and success in life beyond high school.

2. **What criteria are being used to determine what qualifies as industry certifications in the accountability system?**

   - Statute lacks a workable definition of what constitutes an industry certification. TEC §28.025 authorizes performance acknowledgements on students' diplomas for those who earn industry certifications. In 19 Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §74.14 (e)(2-3), the State Board of Education has recognized certain attributes that qualify various attestations of achievement as recognized industry certifications. This ensures that the achievement represents the acquisition of foundational skills and learning to ensure meaningful educational attainment. This fulfills the public education goal of preparing students for success in postsecondary endeavors, whether they are succeeding directly in the workplace or pursuing higher educational opportunities.

     Similarly, the list of industry certifications in proposed new 19 TAC §74.1003 recognizes in the accountability system public schools that establish structures where students acquire the skills and learning needed for success in business and industry. In determining the list, the Commissioner considered the following factors:

- o **State-, nationally- or internationally-recognized**: Recognition through a national or international business, industry, professional organization, state agency, government entity, or state-based industry association.
- o **End of Program**: Represents a culmination of knowledge and skills achieved through completion of a program of study in a high school career and technical education program.
- o **Stackable**: Attainable by high school students and transfers seamlessly to postsecondary work through acceptance for credit or hours at an institution of higher education or to additional industry certifications and opportunities through acceptance by industry as a validated credential for workplace entry and advancement.
- o **Valuable for Industry:** Demonstrates the skills and abilities necessary to secure entry into high-skill occupations as demonstrated through attributes such as high wage jobs with growth potential.

3. **What process was used by TEA to receive input from districts, business, and industry about the list of certifications?**
   - In September of 2016, TEA requested information about available credentials, certifications and other forms of achievement recognition from districts through a "To the Administrator Addressed" letter as well as compiling the same from the Perkins Program Effectiveness Report (PER) list. The list compiled from districts and the PER was reviewed and analyzed through multiple rounds of review (by TEA staff, other agencies, and industry partners) to eliminate duplications, determine those not meeting base criteria (state, national or international recognition), and identify those not meeting other criteria (end of high school program and/or transference to postsecondary work or additional certifications). The many rounds of analysis reduced the list to the original 67 proposed certifications included in the January 2017 published version. Districts were able to submit feedback about this initial list from January through March 2017.
   - TEA staff engaged in outreach through regional service centers as well as business and industry representatives throughout the spring of 2017 to solicit feedback about the proposed list. Outreach included regional workforce boards, the Texas Workforce Commission, local chambers of commerce, and other business and industry stakeholder groups.

4. **What process was used by TEA to review the feedback collected from districts, business and industry?**
   - Districts submitted feedback through an online survey about the proposed list of industry certifications as well as providing recommendations for the inclusion of additional industry certifications. A similar request was made to industry and business representatives through outreach at the Texas Workforce Commission, the 28 regional workforce boards, regional chambers of commerce, and other local workforce councils. Through analyzing all feedback, it was determined that

9 out of the 67 proposals were not representative of industry need and were removed from the list (e.g. I-CAR certifications). Districts requested an additional 291 for consideration while industry requested an additional 37. These recommendations were reviewed against the criteria, and it was determined that an additional 15 met all criteria for inclusion as an industry certification and were added to the final list.

5. **Why aren't all of the PER list of credentials included in the final list?**
   - Based on the criteria, not all of the credentials on the PER list were eligible for inclusion. For example, they may have included credentials issued by vendors or those that did not meet the other criteria the Commissioner included.

6. **How will districts provide TEA with information about the students earning certifications?**
   - Beginning in the 2017-18 academic year, districts will enter information about industry-based certifications in PEIMS through the addition of a new PEIMS code table (C214). Information will be reported during the Fall 2017 collection (reporting on data related to 2016-17 graduates). Districts have the ability to enter up to 3 certifications per student.

7. **How will the list of industry certifications be calculated within the accountability system?**
   - Information will be forthcoming as the new accountability system is adopted.

8. **How does this list impact the industry certifications eligible for student performance acknowledgments in the Foundation High School Program?**
   - TEA does not have the authority to define criteria for industry certifications eligible for student performance acknowledgements. It is the responsibility of the district to apply the definition adopted by the State Board of Education in determining what qualifies as a certification for performance acknowledgments. They may or may not include certifications on the list for accountability.

9. **If our district has invested in certifications that are not included in the final list, what should we do?**
   - It is at the discretion of the district to make decisions about which credentials will be offered on each campus. The final list provides clarity about industry certification offerings recognized in the state's accountability system. TEA understands that district programs might choose to offer credentials that serve as important building blocks for students, yet do not necessarily meet the criteria for the accountability system.

10. **How will TEA consider certifications that students may earn after completion of a high school program of study (those that are based on high school student preparation, but certified during a 2-year or 4-year post-secondary program of study)?**

- More information will be forthcoming as the new accountability system is adopted.

11. How will TEA account for changes in certifications and industry needs?
- TEA understands that new developments in program and industry occur regularly. Therefore, TEA will engage in an annual review of the list of certifications.

12. How will business and industry provide input into which credentials qualify as industry certifications?
- The agency will solicit feedback from regional industry clusters and organizations about the industry certifications included in the final list on a yearly basis. As TEA further defines the annual vetting process, information can be found on the Division of College, Career and Military Preparation's website at http://tea.texas.gov/Academics/College_and_Career_Readiness/.

13. Why are there only 10 out of the 16 industry clusters represented on the final accountability list?
- TEA will continue to evaluate certifications that meet the criteria within each industry cluster through the annual review process. Some career clusters include occupations that require a higher level credential for entry level positions into a particular industry (e.g. Associate's Degree) and, therefore, may not include industry-based certifications that are attainable in high school.

14. What can I do if I believe there are certifications that should be included but are not represented on the final list?
- TEA will engage in an annual review process of the list of certifications. As the agency further defines the annual vetting process, information can be found on the Division of College, Career and Military Preparation's website at http://tea.texas.gov/Academics/College_and_Career_Readiness/.