



Professional License Renewal: Audit FAQs

Frequently Asked Questions

June 2015

**Professional License Renewal
Frequently Asked Questions Audit:**

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Introduction

Across the Commonwealth, the renewal of professional licenses demonstrates every educator's commitment and dedication to remain current in their fields and knowledgeable in their respective licensure areas. Since the implementation of new licensure standards in 1994, educators have continually risen to the occasion of license renewal by meeting the requirements set forth by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Since the mandate, the renewal of vocational professional licenses became effective on September 1, 2003. Vocational educators across Massachusetts have also continued to successfully meet those requirements via completion of professional development activities addressing the areas of subject matter knowledge and skills, pedagogy, labor relations, safety and health – and many more.

In short, Massachusetts educators with academic and vocational professional licenses are routinely taking a serious approach to their craft by engaging in meaningful, high-quality professional development via the implementation of well-planned, innovative, and thought-provoking professional development activities that share best practices and produce positive student outcomes. As such, we have prepared this *Professional License Renewal: Audit FAQ* with the goal of addressing any and all questions that you may have as you prepare your professional development packet with an eye toward an individual professional license renewal audit.

Purpose of the Audit

Unlike years ago, the current process for license renewal does not require educators with Massachusetts professional licenses to verify their Professional Development Points (PDPs) with their renewal application submission. Since the process now operates on the honor system, to ensure the integrity of the process, a sampling of applications is selected periodically at-random via ELAR (our Educator Licensure And Renewal online system), for a Professional Development Audit.

Audit Selection Process

Educators who have been selected for an audit will include those who have been issued their renewed license(s) any time during the last five years, whether the educator is retired, or still employed or not employed under any of their Professional licensure areas. When the professional development documentation is received, the Licensure Office will assess the documents to determine if the minimum requirements of Professional Development Points (PDPs) have been met.

The audit process is a key indicator of successful completion of the minimum requirement of earned Professional Development Points (PDPs). The audit process continues to be a success.

Individual Professional Development Plans (IPDPs)

Q: How can my employing school district assist me with the development of my Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP) and Professional Development (PD) documentation?

A: School districts are required to make the following materials available to all educators as they begin the development of their IPDPs and their five-year renewal cycle:

- a. A copy of the district's Annual Professional Development Plan
- b. A copy of the District Improvement Plan or relevant School Improvement Plan
- c. Verifying documentation that confirms attendance, hours of instruction or PDPs awarded, and successful completion of the activity if the school district provides its own PD opportunities for its educators.

NOTE: It is the responsibility of each educator to ensure that her/his own proposed IPDP activities meet all state requirements for license renewal, that at least 80% of its goals align with the needs of the employing school district and receive the necessary yearly or every two year supervisor review/approvals, and the supervisor's final endorsement once the IPDP has been completed.

Q: Do I need to show IPDP Approval or Final Endorsement?

A: Educators, who hold a Professional license and wish to renew it, must develop an IPDP; however, the Approval or Final Endorsement by a supervisor is required *only* of educators currently employed under a Professional license in a Massachusetts public school district. For the purposes of the audit, if an educator is not employed in the role of the license, a supervisor's review, approval, and final endorsement of the IPDP is not expected.

Q: I am employed in the role of my Professional license in a private school that requires a license. Do I need my supervisor to provide the Final Endorsement before I renew my Professional license?

A: No. Only educators employed in a Massachusetts *public* school must obtain final IPDP approval and endorsement prior to submitting the renewal application.

Q: I was employed by two different Massachusetts school districts during the last five years; who should endorse my IPDP?

A: The supervisor of your current school (or that supervisor's designee) is the appropriate person to provide the final review and endorsement of your IPDP.

Supporting Documents

Q: What does a complete Professional Development audit packet include?

A: Applicants must submit the following documents to the Department for review within thirty (30) days of the Audit Notification Letter receipt:

- Verification of Individual Professional Development Plan (Form A; side 1):
 - This section will ask for biographical information as well as the licenses that you have renewed within the last five years. This section must be completed even if the educator was not employed in a Massachusetts public school under any of the licensure areas submitted for renewal.
- Supervisor Approval and Final Endorsement (Form A; side 2):
 - The supervisor final endorsement verifies that the educator's IPDP has been reviewed and approved and that the record of professional development activities has been successfully completed within the educator's five-year renewal cycle. The supervisor approval and final endorsement ensures that the reported activities have been consistent with the educator's approved IPDP.

NOTE: If the educator is employed under the license and no approval signatures have been provided, a written explanation for the failure to obtain prior approval and final endorsement of the IPDP must be submitted to the Department.

- Professional Development (PD) Activity Log (Form B)
 - Applicants must complete a separate page (Form B) for each license renewed. Each column must be filled out accordingly. Applicants should only list sufficient PD activities to show that the minimum requirement of PDPs has been met.
 - Professional Development Activities: Educators must verify the completion of all applicable PD activities, which may include: official transcripts, grade reports, certificates of completion, individual personnel transcripts from school districts, letters of support from school administrator, etc.

Q: Where do I mail my Professional Development supporting documents?

A: Please mail your PD supporting documents to:

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Office of Educator Licensure
c/o License Renewal Audit
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Q: What are acceptable forms of documentation?

A: The most common forms used include:

- College/university courses
 - Official college/university transcript(s)
 - Grade report(s)
- School district, collaborative, or registered provider initiatives
 - Official certificates or letters verifying participation (Documents should include total number of workshop hours/participation/PDPs, proper signatures, etc.)
 - Professional Development transcripts or a *My Learning Plan* issued by the school district must include an official signature and contact information

NOTE: All forms must be signed off by your Administrator, PD Coordinator, or HR Director (or supervisor's designee).

- Evidence of published written materials
Published articles, books, professional journals, curriculum units, etc. (Please do not submit the product. A letter, on official letterhead from the supervisor is acceptable).
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education-sponsored Summer Professional Development Institutes
 - Official certificates or letters verifying participation (hours of completion/participation, total PDPs, and proper signature)

NOTE: Please only send copies of your professional development documents. Do not send original documents to the Department; they will not be returned.

If you are unable meet the 30-day timeline, under extenuating circumstances, educators may have the opportunity to request an extension by contacting the Department as soon as possible. (Contact information is found on your audit notification letter.) If you do not contact the Department to request such an extension, you may run the risk of jeopardizing your Massachusetts public school employment status if employed in the role of your renewed license. Additionally, your renewal application may be withdrawn, and the status of your license will change to Inactive/Invalid. For information on Inactive/Invalid licenses, please visit: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr44.html?section=07>

Q: How can I organize my PD audit packet to make the process go smoothly?

A: A record of complete professional development activities must include: topics covered, type of professional activities completed, the dates of the activities, and the number of PDPs and/or hours awarded. In order for the Department to properly assess your PD activities, you must use the PD Activity Log (Form B) provided for documenting and dividing PD activities by topic, as well as by content, pedagogy, and/or general educational electives.

Professional Development Points (PDPs)

Q: How many PDPs are required in content, pedagogy, or general educational electives?

A: A minimum of 150 PDPs are required, of which a minimum of ninety (90) points must be in content and thirty (30) may be in pedagogy. You have the option of earning the remaining 30 points in general educational elective(s), more content, or more pedagogy.

Q: How far back in my license history may I go in selecting eligible PD activities?

A: You may go five (5) years back from the date of your renewal application (2009-2014). Any PDPs earned before or after the renewal of your license(s) will not apply.

Q: I have renewed both an academic license and a vocational technical license. How should I document my PDPs?

A: The requirements for both academic and vocational Professional licenses require a total of 150 PDPs for the Primary license. For more specific details on the renewal requirements, please visit: <http://1.usa.gov/1M5tvXp> (Renewing an academic Professional license) and <http://1.usa.gov/1KNcN1y> (Renewing a Vocational Technical Professional license)

NOTE: Please reference your personal profile via your online ELAR account in order to learn which license you have designated as your Primary license.

Q: What is Bundling?

A: In situations where a minimum of ten (10) PDPs is mandated to meet license renewal requirements, bundling allows a licensure candidate the flexibility of combining/grouping PD workshops/series/conference hours to ensure that the total in that required subject area meets or exceeds ten (10) or more professional development hours.

NOTE: If you are unable to bundle your topics (when fewer than 10 hours) with other related topics, you will not be able to apply those PD activities to the licensure renewal.

Q: How may I adequately bundle my workshop hours for the purpose of the audit?

A: You may document your bundled hours on the PD Activity Log (Form B). In previous audits, educators have placed brackets, used color codes, or even bullet points to indicate the process of bundling. The auditor should understand the method that you select to verify bundled hours as long as your PD activity log is clear and readable.

Q: May I submit my PD transcript or 'My Learning Plan' issued by my school district?

A: Yes. However, your PD transcript and/or your *My Learning Plan* must include an official signature from your administrator, as well as his/her contact information.

If you are employed under a new administrator since completion of your PD activities, please have the new administrator sign your PD document. If you are bundling, please make sure that both your PD document and your activity log include the bundled hours.

Q: I was required to take the Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) endorsement course of study, and as a result, I have earned PDPs. May I apply these PDPs for this audit?

A: Yes. However, if an educator does not need to utilize all or any of the PDPs earned through completion of the SEI course, that educator may be able to 'carry over' PDPs earned in one renewal cycle towards their next renewal cycle for the purpose of the SEI course only.

NOTE: Please keep and file your SEI certificate/document with your own personal records. Educators who decide to carry over PDPs earned from the SEI course will be subject to another audit. For more information, see the Renewal Addendum at: <http://1.usa.gov/1BKEPCT>.

Q: I learned that the license renewal regulations for academic Professional licenses were amended as of June 2012. Must I apply the new regulations towards this audit?

A: No. The new requirements will be effective for those renewing a Professional license on or after July 1, 2016.

NOTE: The new regulations *do not* apply to vocational technical educators at this time.

Q: Do you have a list of approved Professional Development providers?

A: The Department does not maintain a list of approved PD providers at this time. However, school districts and collaboratives are automatically approved as PD providers. Universities and colleges that issue credits and CEUs are not required to register with the Department. For more information on professional development, please visit <http://bit.ly/1Jr6vmk>.

Q: Do you accept PDPs earned from school districts in other states?

A: Professional development activities completed in school districts outside of Massachusetts are assessed on a case by case basis according to current policies. Please submit all supporting documents as described in this guide.

NOTE: This policy is subject to change in the future.

Assessment/Timeline

Q: How long do I have to submit my Professional Development audit packet to the Department?

A: You have thirty (30) days from receipt of your audit notification letter to submit your audit packet.

Q: What communication will I receive from the Department after my Professional Development audit packet has been received?

A: Soon after the Department receives all forms and documents necessary for the audit, a postcard will be mailed confirming receipt of your Professional Development audit packet. The postcard will also provide you with a general process timeline.

Q: Who assesses my documents and activities?

A: Your file will be assigned to a license renewal auditor, and s/he will review your documents using criteria established by state regulations regarding the quality and eligibility of the PD activity and the authenticity of the submitted documents verifying participation. For more information on the License Renewal requirements, go to: <http://1.usa.gov/1M5tvXp>.

Q: Why was my audit packet mailed back to me?

A: There are several reasons that an audit packet may be returned:

- The audit packet may be incomplete. A complete audit packet should include: verification of Professional Development Plan (Form A; front and back), PD activity log (Form B), and documents to support the PDPs the educator has earned.
- The PD activity log (Form B) did not clearly list the activities in an organized fashion under content, pedagogy, or elective. Also, although there may be evidence of bundling, it is neither adequately documented on the supporting document nor the activity log. For example, a certificate of completion verifying completion of five hours for a 'Professional Development Day' would not be sufficient evidence because it does not give evidence of content, pedagogy, or elective nor is it bundled with another related topic. A course description or letter from the administrator for a 'Professional Development Day' would also be required.
- One or more of the supporting documents did not include sufficient evidence; such evidence, such as date of completion, number of hours/PDPs, title of activity, sign-off from the school Administrator, PD Coordinator or HR director, etc.

Q: What happens if my audit packet is not approved for one or more licenses?

A: You will receive correspondence via e-mail or a letter from your auditor. You will then be given the opportunity to submit additional PDPs to support your license. PDPs must be earned within the last five year renewal cycle. If you are unable to provide evidence with additional PDPs, you will not pass the audit for that specific license, and the status of the license will be changed to whatever the status would have been if the license was not renewed (Inactive/Invalid). For information on inactive/invalid licenses, visit the License Renewal Regulations, 603 CMR 44.07 at: <http://bit.ly/1FuyLPg>

Q: Will I have a right to appeal the decision if my Professional Development activities are found inadequate?

A: The final decision may be appealed to the Commissioner. A letter must be submitted within thirty (30) days from receipt of notification of the results of the assessment and explaining why you disagree with the findings. The Commissioner or his designee will make a final, independent determination regarding the decision.

Vocational Technical Educator (VTE) License Renewal

Q: What is required in order to renew a VTE license?

A: The Department requires that you file a Record of Vocational Technical Professional Development Activities (Form B-Voc):

Candidates must complete a separate page for each license being renewed. Be sure to select from the following Vocational Technical positions: *Teacher, Superintendent-Director, Principal, Supervisor-Director, or Cooperative Education Coordinator*. Each column must be filled out accordingly. There is no need to list all activities that you have completed; only enough activities to show that the minimum requirement of PDPs has been met for each license are required. The list should include the completed PD activities that were required by your IPDP and must have been completed no more than five years prior to the date that your renewal application was submitted.

Q: What forms are considered acceptable proofs of professional development for VTE candidates?

A: The most common forms used include:

- College/university courses
 - Official college/university transcript(s)
 - Grade report(s)
- School district, collaborative, or registered provider initiatives
 - Official certificates or letters verifying participation (Documents should include total number of workshop hours/participation/PDPs, proper signatures, etc.)
 - Individual personnel transcript from your school district.

NOTE: All forms must be signed off by your Administrator, PD Coordinator, or HR Director.

- Evidence of published written materials
 - Published articles, books, professional journals, curriculum units, etc. (Please do not submit the product. A letter, on official letterhead from the supervisor is acceptable).
- Department of Elementary and Secondary Education-sponsored Summer Professional Development Institutes
 - Official certificates or letters verifying participation (hours of completion/participation, total PDPs, and proper signature)

NOTE: Please only send copies of your professional development documents. Do not send original documents to the Department; they will not be returned.

If you are unable meet the 30-day timeline, under extenuating circumstances, educators may have the opportunity to request an extension by contacting the Department as soon as possible. (Contact information is found on your audit notification letter.) If you do not contact the Department to request such an extension, you may run the risk of jeopardizing your Massachusetts public school employment

status if employed in the role of your renewed license. Additionally, your renewal application may be withdrawn, and the status of your license changed a non-renewal status of Inactive/Invalid. For information on Inactive/Invalid licenses, please visit: <http://bit.ly/1FuyLPg>

Q: Where do I mail my supporting VTE PD documents?

A: Please mail your supporting Vocational Technical Education PD documents to:

Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Office of Educator Licensure
c/o Vocational Technical Licensure Audit Renewal
75 Pleasant Street
Malden, MA 02148

Q: What is the expected total number of PDPs, point distribution of content vs. pedagogy (professional skill), and minimum points per topic that will apply to me?

A: For your designated Primary license to be renewed, you must provide evidence that a minimum number of 150 PDPs has been earned within the five-year cycle, specifically:

*For Vocational Technical **Teachers** (Primary license) – A minimum of 150 PDPs:* Ten points must be in subject matter, knowledge, and skills; ten points in pedagogy; ten points in academic and technical curriculum integration; ten points in safety and health. Also, a current state and/or national license – if required for the particular teacher license**

*For Vocational Technical **Administrators and Coordinators** (Primary Area) – A minimum of 150 PDPs:* Supervision; school law; school finance; labor relations; safety and health; curriculum; labor laws**

*Each Additional Area (**Teachers**) – 30 PDPs in any of the four areas:* Subject matter knowledge and skills; pedagogy; academic and technical curriculum integration; safety and health. Also, a current state and/or national license – if required for the particular teacher license**

*Each Additional Area (**Administrators and Coordinators**) – 30 PDP's in any of the following areas, specific to the license:* Supervision; school law; school finance; labor relations; safety and health; curriculum; labor laws**

****NOTE:** Refer to Chapter 74 Guide for Professional Vocational Technical Educator License Renewal for specific license(s) and PDP areas – <http://1.usa.gov/1KNcN1y>

Q: Do I need to submit copies of current state or national license(s)?

A: Yes. Please submit copies of your current state or national license(s), as applicable.

Helpful Definitions

Content Knowledge

Subject matter knowledge of the license area: (Please see 603 CMR 7.06 at <http://bit.ly/1AOmY2F> for subject matter knowledge requirements for various teacher licenses).

Pedagogy

Skills and knowledge directly related to instruction and instructional effectiveness or teaching methods. The Professional Standards for Teachers and Administrators define the pedagogical and other professional knowledge and skills required of all educators (See 603 CMR 7.08: Professional Standards for Teachers, and 7.10: Professional Standards for Administrators at: <http://bit.ly/1Q7sch1>

Electives

Professional development activities or experiences related to general educational issues of interest to the educator other than the content knowledge of the licensure area or pedagogy.

Topic

A single or tightly integrated area of study within an academic discipline or related to a particular method of teaching or administration. Sample topics include, but are not limited to:

- The American Revolution (within history)
- Direct Instruction (within pedagogy)
- Questioning Techniques (within pedagogy)
- Alternative Grouping (within pedagogy)
- Supervision and Evaluation (within administration)
- Victorian Poetry (within English)

Professional Development Point (PDP):

A unit of measurement of professional development activities. PDPs are measured in clock hours. Courses and other professional development activities provided by professional associations, educational collaboratives, or professional development providers that meet specific international standards sometimes are measured in Continuing Education Units (CEUs) as defined by the International Association for Continuing Education and Training. College course credit is measured in semester hours. Generally, the formula for converting clock hours to PDPs, CEUs to PDPs, and semester hours to PDPs is:

- 1 Clock Hour = 1 PDP
- 1 CEU= 10 PDPs (as defined by the International Association for Continuing Education (IACET) www.iacet.org)
- 1 Undergraduate Semester Hour = 15 PDPs (22.5 if significantly new to the educator)
- 1 Graduate Semester Hour = 22.5 PDPs
- Bundling: Example: Four related workshops/three hours each = 12 hours or 12 PDPs

Helpful Links

www.mass.gov/ese/licensure/renew

Renewal Requirements (Regulations and Guidelines)

www.mass.gov/ese/licensure/voctech

Chapter 74 Guide for Vocational Technical Educator License Renewal

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/pd/>

Professional Development Offerings and other Renewal Resources & Tools for Educators and Providers

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr7.html>

Subject Matter Knowledge Requirements for Teachers