

Multidistrict Online Provider Approval Processes

SSB 5410 instructs OSPI to develop the following processes for Multidistrict Online Providers:

- Approval Process
- Appeal Process
- Renewal Process
- Monitoring and Rescindment Process

This document details each of these processes. Complete details about the various processes, as well as the provider application form, will be on the Digital Learning Department (DLD) website by December 31st, 2009.

Note that there is also an eligibility process that takes place prior to any of the processes outlined in this document. Potential providers will be able to complete a questionnaire on the DLD website to determine if the provider needs to participate in the approval process. Providers who are exempt will be given the opportunity to register with the DLD as an exempt provider. Information about these providers will be included on the DLD website to ensure that the DLD is able to provide students and parents with a fairly comprehensive list of providers operating in the state.

Approval process

Application Form

The application will be entirely web-based, and it will exist on the DLD website.

Applicants will create an account to allow incomplete applications to be saved prior to submission. Applicants will be able to edit their application as many times as they wish prior to the deadline.

The application form includes the following sections:

- *Contact information.*
- *Background information*, including basic information about the provider and the provider's business.
- *Provider data*, including student-to-teacher ratios, completion rates, and passing rates, as required by SSB 5410.
- *Certificate of assurances.*
- *Supporting documentation for criteria*, including documents and/or links provided by the applicant to assist the review committee when scoring the application.
- *Access information*, including login credentials to provider systems.

Note that the applicant *must* satisfy each of the assurances in order to submit the application. Failure to complete the certificate of assurances means the application will not be reviewed.

Once the application is submitted, DLD staff will review it for completeness. If the application is in order, the applicant will then be reviewed against the criteria by the Approval Review Committee.

Review Committee

Potential committee members will apply to serve on the Approval Review Committee through an online application process. Committee members will be trained via an online interactive format, covering the approval process, the criteria and the scoring practice.

At least 5 reviewers will review each provider. The committee members will score the applications against the criteria using Excel score sheets. The committee will have one month to review the providers. During this period, the committee members can ask DLD staff questions about the process, but providers will not be able to amend their applications.

Scoring and Approval Recommendations

DLD staff will then compile the scores from the committee. The high and the low score for each provider will be discarded to improve inter-rater reliability. The average of the remaining scores will be considered as the applicant's final score. Applicants must meet a set score in order to be recommended for approval.

DLD staff will submit the scores and approval recommendations to the Superintendent of Public Instruction for final approval.

Notification

Once the final approvals have been made, DLD staff will share the approval decisions with the providers. The communications will include specific details about scores, including feedback from the review committee. Compiled scores and approval/denial feedback will be shared only with the provider; no scores will be posted on the OSPI site.

Appeal (on Denial of Approval/Renewal) Process

Applicants who are denied approval or renewal are given a compilation of their review scores/comments. Appeals are based on the criteria the *applicant* chooses to address with updated supporting evidence or documentation. Appeals must be submitted within 15 working days of the receipt of the notice of denial.

Upon receipt of the appeal, DLD will assign the appeal review of the criteria in question to an appeals review committee comprised of reviewers who have *not previously reviewed the applicant*.

As with the approval process, the review will be conducted by a committee of 5 reviewers, the high and low scores will be removed and the remaining scores are averaged for a final score. Appeal review scores and feedback are due back from committee to OSPI within 10 days.

The updated review score and feedback (recommendations if approved, notes on failing criteria if denied) will be returned by DLD to the provider within 5 working days of receipt from the appeals review committee. Final appeal decisions are made by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Providers subject to denial of approval who do not appeal or whose appeal is denied are eligible to submit a new application in the next renewal/approval period.

Renewal Process for Approved Providers

Approvals will be for the four subsequent consecutive full school years after the approval date. The renewal process is identical to the approval process. Approved providers must initiate their renewal no later than the approval window in their fourth year of approved status in order to maintain approval into year 5. For example, a provider approved on 4/1/10, must be approved again any time up to or including the fall 2014 renewal period in order to be approved for the 2014-15 school year.

Grandfathered Provider Renewal Process

All providers currently grandfathered into OSPI approval under Section 3, item 3 of SSB 5410 will participate in the renewal process described above no later than 8/31/2012.

Prior to renewal/approval, grandfathered providers are required to uphold the terms of the assurances section of the provider approval application, to the criteria set forth in SB 5410, section 4, as well as to the rescindment activities outlined below. Grandfathered providers are subject to the approval criteria only in the process of a rescindment.

Monitoring and Rescindment Process

Approved providers are subject to the monitoring and rescindment process.

Monitoring and rescindment triggers

DLD will accept complaints and feedback about approved providers through a web page on the DLD website.

A rescindment process can be triggered in the following ways:

1. When DLD staff deems a formal complaint filed against the provider with the Digital Learning Department as warranting investigation.
2. Failure to meet approval/renewal criteria and processes deemed fulfilled at time of last approval/renewal or failure to uphold required assurances.
3. Major financial changes that impact the provider's ability to maintain the program in the configuration in which it was approved.

Grandfathered providers are subject to rescindment prior to their official approval (by 8/31/2012) for failure to maintain the criteria outlined in SSB 5410, section 3.3 including:

1. NAAS accreditation or accreditations from other approved agencies as identified by OSPI.
2. Washington certification status of online instructors.
3. And for failure to provide to the DLD the information required by SSB 5410, section 4.1.

Rescindment activities

Providers will be notified if there is substantial evidence that they are not meeting one or more of the approval conditions and that rescindment is being considered. The letter will state the specific areas of concern and the provider will be invited to submit a corrective action plan with a timeline to address the specific areas of concern. If the provider does not respond to the rescindment notice, rescindment goes into effect within 15 business days.

DLD will review the corrective action plan and make a determination on whether it satisfactorily addresses the specific areas of concern, whether additional actions are necessary, or is substantially incomplete and the approval should be immediately rescinded. Before making this decision, the provider will have the opportunity to clarify and adjust their plan.

Recognizing the serious nature of rescindment and its potential impact on students, districts and providers, OSPI will only rescind approvals if the provider is unwilling to take the necessary corrective actions to bring the courses/programs in compliance with the approval criteria/assurances.

If OSPI determines that a provider approval must be rescinded, the implementation of the rescindment will, to the greatest extent possible, be timed to prevent unnecessary disruption to the education of the students. Enrollments – including second semesters of year-long courses - received by the provider on or before the date of rescindment are not affected by the rescindment; program enrollees will be able to finish the school year as planned.

Rescinded providers are able to submit for re-approval during subsequent approval application periods.