

Final Changes to the Online Approval Process

Overview

From October 1 to October 31, 2025, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) collected feedback on the proposed changes to the online learning approval process. Based on feedback received, the following changes will be implemented beginning January 1, 2026.

Clarifying Definitions:

OSPI continues to explore ways to clarify definitions that are unclear. Below are simplified definitions from [RCW 28A.250.010](#) and [WAC 392-502-010](#), which may evolve to support greater clarity.

- **Affiliate Partnership:** An affiliate partnership means that instructional materials and instruction are provided by an OSPI-approved online course provider and cannot be modified by the Local Education Agency (LEA).
- **Online Course Provider:** Any public or private organization wishing to sell instructional materials (organized by content area and/or grade-level/grade band) and/or contracted instruction to LEAs, schools, and/or students. Instruction provided under contract includes other agreements such as cooperative agreements, memorandums of understanding, or any other arrangements that involve the transfer of dollars in exchange for instructional materials or instruction and is subject to [WAC 392-121-188](#).
- **Online Learning:** A flexible learning option in which:
 - More than half of a student's schedule is delivered electronically using the internet or other computer-based methods,
 - More than half of the teaching is conducted remotely, and
 - Contact time with a WA state certified teacher happens either synchronously or asynchronously.
- **Online School Program:** An OSPI-approved, online program of basic education that delivers online learning to part-time or full-time enrolled students.
 - **Multidistrict Program:** Serves resident students and allows for over 10% nonresident students, with or without an affiliate partnership.
 - **Single District Program:** Serves resident students and fewer than 10% nonresident students, with or without an affiliate partnership.

Final Changes:

Online School Program Applications

- Applications for all online school programs will be processed through a streamlined webform. This includes:
 - Multidistrict programs, with and without an affiliate partnership.



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- Single district programs, with and without an affiliate partnership.
- Beginning in January 2026, single and multidistrict applications will be accepted year-round. The [streamlined webform](#) will be available on the OSPI website.
- Single and multidistrict online programs that wish to purchase instructional materials and/or contract for instruction may do so by selecting an OSPI-approved online course provider from the list available on the [Approved Online Course Providers](#) webpage. LEAs cannot enter into contracts with online course providers that are not yet OSPI-approved.
- Approval assurances will no longer be collected as part of the application process.

Online School Program Initial Approval and Continued Approval

- After review of the online school program application, approval assurances will be digitally sent to superintendents for agreement.
- Assurances have been streamlined across all flexible learning options and will be routinely updated.
- For approved online school programs, superintendents will annually review and agree to updated assurances via a digital signature.

Online Course Providers

- OSPI will conduct a Request for Proposal (RFP) process to select a third-party reviewer/s to approve online course providers and:
 - Align approval decisions with OSPI approval assurances, criteria, and performance targets [\(WAC 392-502-030\)](#).
 - Utilize the most current [National Standards for Quality Online Learning](#) (NSQOL).
 - Establish a process to ensure that all OSPI-approved online course providers be reviewed, no later than the beginning of SY2027–28 and, at a minimum, undergo continued approval every four years.
 - Establish a preliminary process of appeals for online course providers who are denied approval.
 - Implement a process of rescinding approvals of any online course provider failing to meet the minimum expectations outlined in the approval/renewal criteria (these criteria are currently being developed).
 - Report on data processes per [WAC 392-502-030](#) and [WAC 392-502-050](#).
 - Establish a process for reviewing one to three letters of endorsement from WA state LEAs to ensure the instructional needs of students enrolled in the proposed online program will be met.
 - Collect and maintain transparent pricing information for instructional materials and/or contracted instruction for publication on the OSPI website.

- Establish a process for obtaining and maintaining parent company information and accountable party/parties of online course providers.
- Applications for not yet OSPI-approved online course providers will remain paused until the completion of the RFP process. Once finalized, the details of the RFP will be published on the OSPI [Competitive Procurements](#) webpage.
- Online course providers must be approved by the OSPI-selected third-party reviewer/s before entering partnership contracts with LEAs (via instruction provided under contract [WAC 392-121-188](#)), unless they have current OSPI-approval status.
- It is the intention that the cost for the initial third-party review and continued approval will be the responsibility of online course providers, and will be subject to a sliding scale, with non-profit LEAs incurring the least amount of cost.
- Online course provider approvals will be limited dependent on OSPI's capacity to monitor and support current and future online programs.
- A designee from each OSPI-approved online course provider will be required to attend a recurring webinar series. More information will be forthcoming.
- Single and multidistrict online programs will not need to be reviewed under the RFP process unless they also operate as an online course provider.

Thank you to the Online Learning Advisory Committee (OLAC) for their partnership and recommendations for changes to the online school program approval process.