

NCATE Program Review Newsletter – Spring 2006

FROM THE PRESIDENT Teacher Preparation Reform in Action Arthur E. Wise, NCATE



NCATE's reformulated program review system is well underway, and it promises to lead institutions in the use of assessment in the higher education arena. As a program reviewer, you play a critical role in the continuing reform of teacher preparation. The review of individual programs is a central part of the NCATE performance-based accreditation system. These reviews feed directly into the analysis of NCATE's Standard 1 on candidate knowledge and skills. Institutions must meet all six unit standards to be accredited without conditions. Thus, the results of the program review process have a direct result on accreditation decisions.

As you know, the new program review system was first implemented in fall 2004 by institutions that agreed to pilot the process. Much was learned from the pilot, and many of the inevitable bumps in the road have been smoothed out. NCATE's promised web-based format was not delivered by its contractor, and staff quickly jumped into the breach to formulate an interim technology solution. While it was not without problems the first semester, staff have worked hard to ensure reviewers in ensuing semesters do not encounter the number of glitches that were present when the system first became operational. The technology will continue to improve.

NCATE's program standards are central to the NCATE accreditation process because they answer the question: what must teachers and other educators know and be able to do? The standards are developed by 19 specialized professional associations

representing the various disciplines of teaching. They are recognized by NCATE's Specialty Areas Studies Board for use in NCATE's performance-based accreditation system. NCATE accredited institutions are expected to use the program standards in the design and delivery of their programs.

Program standards developed by NCATE member professional associations have had a huge impact on the education field. As an NCATE program reviewer, you can take pride in the fact that NCATE's 50 state partners have either adopted NCATE's program standards or have closely aligned their state standards with these program standards. Thus the program standards developed by professionals in their respective fields have become defacto national program standards to a considerable degree.

NCATE's new method of reviewing individual programs at institutions is an example of reform in action. The review answers the question: what is the evidence concerning what teacher candidates know and can do? NCATE now expects all candidates in an individual program (mathematics, English, social studies, etc.) to undergo six to eight common assessments developed by the institution. Curriculum is guided by the standards, as are the common program assessments.

As a result of the new NCATE requirement for common program assessments, faculty must first attend to the standards in order to develop the assessments. Faculty development of common assessments requires collaboration among faculty within the school of education, and between faculty in the school of education and the relevant arts and sciences department, such as math or science.

The development of common assessments requires attention to consistency, fairness,

and accuracy of the assessments. The assessments must measure what is taught, and what is taught is guided by the standards. Therefore, the institutions must necessarily ensure alignment between the standards and assessments. Faculty must communicate and collaborate to engage in the process.

The criteria for the common assessments will make sense to the layperson—including state legislators and state board members. If the state requires a licensure test, data from the test(s) is the first assessment. In addition, the public will appreciate and understand that NCATE requires at least one other assessment of content knowledge, such as a test developed by the department. As educators, you know how important the assessments of pedagogical knowledge and skills are—one that demonstrates that candidates can plan effective instruction and design appropriate assessments, and the other that demonstrates that candidates can teach effectively. And the assessment of candidate effects on P-12 student learning provides the ultimate validation of teacher preparation: it makes a difference.

The electronic program review process is saving time and resources for all involved. During the NCATE on-site review of the entire school of education, the on-site team carefully examines the results of the program reviews to help determine the institution's accreditation status.

NCATE understands that as a reviewer, you must undergo training for your position. We know that you dedicate many hours of volunteer time to provide this service to the field. NCATE maintains a group of approximately 400 to 500 individuals who are trained to conduct program reviews. The number of programs reviewed varies by semester, but usually falls between 300 and 400. Thus, as a program reviewer, you are a part of a national team that helps ensure quality in teacher preparation.

NCATE's use of national professional standards developed by the teaching disciplines integrates a number of disciplines under one accreditation umbrella. The cutting edge review system of which you are a part is one that may be emulated by other accrediting bodies or entities within higher education. NCATE could not operate without you, your dedication to the field, and your commitment to quality in teacher preparation.

EVALUATING UNIT-WIDE ASSESSMENTS **Margie Crutchfield, NCATE**

One of the major issues that arose out of the pilot review process was the question of how reviewers could or could not evaluate unit-wide assessments when they were submitted for program review. By "unit-wide," I mean those assessments that the unit has decided would be included in their unit assessment system, usually a student teaching or unit plan assessment. Typically these assessments are exactly the same and are used across all programs. In the pilot review, these assessments were usually submitted with no explanation for how they were implemented in such a way as to demonstrate candidate mastery of specific SPA standards. In fact, in most cases, these assessments were written so generically that it was not possible for reviewers to see their alignment with specific SPA standards.

On the other hand, these assessments, in many cases, have been in place for several years, have been refined over time, and are typically used in discipline-specific settings and, with some work, could be used to show candidate mastery.

NCATE has provided the following guidance to institutions for submitting these kinds of assessments for program review:

Generic student teaching/internship evaluations (those used by all programs in a unit) will not necessarily provide direct evidence of meeting specific SPA standards.

Faculty have several options to ensure that these kinds of unit-wide assessments are appropriate for SPA review. For example, program faculty could develop an addition to a generic student teaching/internship evaluation that does evaluate the candidate on appropriate SPA standards. Faculty could also code elements in the unit-wide assessment with the specific SPA standards that are addressed by the item and, in the discussion in Section IV for this assessment, provide a rationale for how these items are evaluated in practice to ensure that SPA standards are addressed. A third option is to use a SPA specific assessment completed during a pre-student teaching practicum.

“Guidelines and Procedures for the NCATE Program Review Process” (updated February 6, 2006, <http://www.ncate.org/institutions/guidelinesProcedures.asp?ch=90>)

As reviewers, you should use the above guidance as you evaluate unit-wide assessments. However, it is up to the report compiler to provide enough information about the assessment, how it is used, etc. so that you can make a reasonable assumption that the standards cited for this assessment are, in fact, addressed by it.

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR NCATE PROGRAM REVIEW: AN UPDATE ON RESOURCES

Deidre Alves, NCATE

*“Love the moment, and the energy of that moment will spread beyond all boundaries.”
Corita Kent, Artist*

And you all know the countless and tireless moments that have been dedicated to the service of Program Review. We thank you for dedicating your expertise, time, and commitment to this most important work. Because of you, many teacher educator programs have been strengthened. The impact that you have had reaches far beyond the institutional walls to include teachers

and the minds, hearts, and futures of the students, families, and communities they touch. A most powerful course set in motion by you. We thank you.

As we move into the spring 2006 Program Review cycle, we wanted to give you an update on the status of the reviews from our last cycle. We are in the process of posting our last reviews to the institutional sites. Reviewer reports will be made available to you so that you will be able to see the version of the report after the SPA audit team and NCATE staffs have reviewed them. Notification will be sent to all reviewers upon completion of this process.

Even though the spring 2006 cycle has just begun, NCATE Program Review staff is already at work developing new and improved reviewer resources to be made available for the fall 2006 review cycle. Currently, we are working to develop a series of web-based training modules. Reviewers will have access to a site that will provide instruction on program reviewing followed by a question and answer series. Your answers will be corrected in the system with annotated explanations. In addition to the web-based training modules, we are working to update reviewer guidelines to reflect the most current and up-to-date information on SPAs and Program Review. There will also be a link to models of well-written Program Recognition Reports that reviewers may use as a resource.

As you can see our future together looks bright. We are excited for what this future will bring and we look forward to its continued success as we move along on our journey.

BECOMING A PROGRAM REVIEWER

Jaye Bishop, NCATE

This spring marks the fourth review cycle since NCATE implemented its electronic program review system. Admittedly, there have been a few bumps along the way, and last fall the sheer volume of program reports was quite challenging. This has all proved to be a valuable learning experience. NCATE is working every day to enhance the technical component of the review process in order to better serve you. We greatly appreciate the work you do; simply put, without you, there would be no program review.

It is with this in mind that we ask you, our trusted colleagues, to help us increase the program reviewer pool. As you may know, there are challenges to composing review teams, both in terms of sufficient coverage on any given team and also ensuring that program reviewers have a reasonable number of program reports in their portfolios. Please speak with persons at your institution or professional association and see if they might be interested in contributing to the review process. Tell them about the benefits of becoming a program reviewer, such as gaining a better understanding of what is expected in a program report. Remind them that serving as a program reviewer is a great way to enhance professional development. Share with them your experience as a program reviewer – the benefits and the challenges.

As you learn of persons interested in reviewing program reports, please contact the appropriate specialized professional association or feel free to simply forward the information to NCATE.

With your support, we can all make Program Review a success!

TECHNICAL CORNER – TECH TIPS

Frank Huang, NCATE

Welcome to the technical support corner! I am Frank Huang, your technical support representative for NCATE Program Review, and I thank you for your cooperation in using the new Program Review system. I especially thank those who gave us feedback about this newly implemented system and procedure. Your comments prompted us to provide this list of technical tips that we believe will help you to do your program review work.

- Always access Program Review by using the access information (URL, ID and password) that was provided by e-mail. Program Review is a separate site from the regular NCATE Web site (<http://www.ncate.org>). Therefore, you cannot reach Program Review by navigating inside the NCATE Web site.
- The safest way to enter your ID and Password is to use the “copy/paste” function. The e-mail you received contains your ID and password. Depending on the font setting of individual e-mail applications, some characters could be confused. For example, the lower-case letter “l” (L) and the number “1” (one) may look very similar in certain fonts. Using “copy/paste” will avoid any typos.
- The Program Review system was designed to run under Microsoft Internet Explorer installed in Microsoft Windows Operating System. Some of you are using Netscape Navigator as the browser, or some may use IE or Netscape in Macintosh OS, which could cause some issues. If you are not operating in a Program Review supported environment (IE in Windows OS) and encounter errors, please contact me for further assistance.

- In general, the size of a file you upload to the program review should not be more than 2 MB. Large file transmissions use more Web server resources and bandwidth and make it easier to introduce a transmitting error. Try to limit your file size by formatting your images into “jpeg” or “gif” format. For example, if you like to include a scanned image in your report, once you complete scanning, you have options to save your scanned document into different formats. Saving it as JPEG or GIF format will reduce file size dramatically compared with saving in a BITMAP (BMP) format. Let us do a simple experiment by using my picture on this newsletter. If I scan this picture and save as a JPEG format, the file size is 904K. However, if I save the same scanned picture into BITMAP (BMP) format, the file size is 11 MB, 10 times larger than the JPEG format.
- Some users reported that they cannot see changes they just made. For example, you entered your name or uploaded a file in a form and clicked the “submit” button, but the screen doesn’t show your name or the file you just uploaded. This type of problem is caused by your browser still pointing to the old cached file. You can fix this problem by simply clicking the “refresh” icon to force your browser to update information. The “refresh” icon is usually conveniently located in your browser menu bar. In Internet Explorer, you can refresh by pressing “F5” on your keyboard.

I look forward to continuing to work with you to help you complete our program review work. Please do not hesitate to contact me via phone or e-mail if you need any help. I will usually respond to your technical inquiries the same business day.

REFLECTING ON THE REVIEW

Cynthia Mee, National-Louis University

I am not sure how many years I have been reading middle level program reviews for NCATE, but it has been more than a few. With each report I read, I learn. I learn how other universities and colleges design their middle level programs. I learn other universities' missions and how their faculty members write syllabi, what books they use, and the classes they require. Through being an NCATE reader I keep current not only in my program requirements but in several other aspects of teacher preparation. I am grateful for having this opportunity to examine and learn about programs across the country.

Being an NCATE SPA reader I also learn about changes in education that advance the ideologies and practices in middle level education. I can then share them with my department colleagues. We learn what we need to do to have a cutting edge program that will prepare our students to be the best teachers they can be and for us to be the best program we can be.

I have to admit I love having the opportunity to evaluate programs to be sure they are inclusive of all NCATE guidelines and earn NCATE recognition.

Through my years of reviewing SPA reports I began receiving two or more reports in the mail, and had to read and evaluate and return the reports in a short period of time. Then with email, team members began sharing their ideas, concerns and summaries, making the process a bit more fluid. Now the new email process has made being a SPA reader even more graceful. There was a time when I needed to have a hard copy to write my responses; I never thought I could go from email to email to write my reviews. But I can, I learned, yet again.

With each change in the process, I have to admit, I still experience some confusions, such as "How can I learn this?" or "How is

this different than what we did before?" Each time I think I understand new changes, they become old, and I have to learn new ones. Although I might moan and groan at the time, I appreciate the new changes. Review changes reflect being current, and I value the need to be current; I also think that it is imperative that NCATE is current. I do miss some of the "old ways." For example, I always enjoyed reading other program syllabi, especially to review what books were used.

The changes in the review process I have experienced during my years as a SPA reader have become easier and more efficient. This doesn't mean when I see that I am getting reports to review I still don't have a few moments of panic and time management concerns, especially when I am the review team chair. But, I have learned that through patience, time and support from Ken M and others, I get my SPA reviews completed.

How I view the NCATE review process is that changes are needed; the review process has become technologically easier and appropriate, the support and training for the reviewers is always there and our work is appreciated (well, maybe not at first by the programs that don't get recognition).

I view my work as an NCATE SPA reader as one of the most important contributions I make to my profession and a very important part of my professional development. Being a SPA reader is a professional privilege and I think that every teacher educator should participate at some time during their career.



A SPA PERSPECTIVE ON THE REVIEW PROCESS

Heather Biggar, National Association for Education of Young Children



The perfect is the enemy of the good. This motto, oft-repeated by my mentor Marilou Hyson, is a personal favorite and reflects how I think about the new review process.

There are some aspects of the new process that cannot be changed, in spite of our nostalgia. For example, early childhood reviewers used to travel to Washington for in-person collaboration with their teammates, and this more personal collaboration is sorely missed. There are other aspects of the new system that should not be changed, because they have improved the system; for example, having identical report structures, language, and evidence for expectations allows reviewers across programs to talk to each other and make sense. The performance-based, data-based nature of reviews also is a strength; reviewers are now able to make more objective and meaningful decisions than they could under the previous system.

We have, without question, tumbled into some pitfalls: technological difficulties, trouble meeting deadlines, and narrow decision criteria that led to miserable pass rates come to mind. There have been minor frustrations—for example, the cumbersome, piecemeal process of accessing attachments to program reports; and there have been more serious complications—for example, reviewers often have not been able to access revised reports' original reviews. Overall, however, we—the collective we of NCATE and the SPAs—seem to have a sharp learning curve and have made changes along the way. NCATE has, for instance, improved the timeliness of the process, and has plans to ensure reviewers have access to original reports in the next cycle. Most notably, NCATE and the SPAs have expanded the decision criteria to recognize

programs with conditions. This recalibration should lead to a marked increase in the number of programs to which reviewers may give a nod of approval.

SPA staff has had to devote enormous time and energy to the process to allow it to function thus far and there is still a tremendous amount of work to do. To make the review process both viable and vibrant, NAEYC must do two things. First, we must expand our pool of trained reviewers. The reviewing process is neither easy nor quick; reviewing the twenty-plus components of a single report and discussing them with colleagues takes a considerable amount of time. NAEYC needs to reduce the burden to reviewers (particularly those who both review and audit reports) so that current reviewers do not get burned out. Second, we must get a sense of inter-rater reliability and, most likely, work quickly to improve it. We hope to provide more frequent and more in-depth trainings, both in person and through distance-learning opportunities.

The viability of the new system rises or falls on the quality of reviews, which will either inspire confidence in the system or frustration and, eventually, withdrawal. We hope the improvements we have in place (e.g., recalibration, improved timeliness) and the improvements that are planned (e.g., more and better training) will permit reviewers to do an excellent job of making fair recognition decisions about their peers. So far the process has had some strengths and some areas for improvements. What more could we expect from our good but imperfect selves?

PROGRAM REVIEW UPDATES

Changes to the Process as of Fall 2005

Change in Decision Criteria:

At a recent meeting, SPA Coordinators evaluated the review process during the two pilot semesters. This included a careful evaluation of the approval rate data and the experiences you reported as well as the experiences of the Audit Teams. SPA Coordinators reported that reviewers and Audit Teams applied the approved decision criteria but often felt that a negative decision did not accurately reflect the quality of the program under review. After examining the data, Coordinators proposed adjustments to the decision criteria that provide greater flexibility to the reviewers but maintain the quality of the review. These changes were adopted by the NCATE Specialty Area Studies Board. The outcome of this change is that you, as a reviewer, have more flexibility to recognize programs that are on the right track but may still have some weaknesses. The decisions were revised as follows:

The language follows:

National Recognition

The program substantially meets standards, but may have some Areas for Improvement (AFIs). These AFIs

- will be included in Annual Report Part C along with AFIs from the unit review.
- are one sentence statements of problems related to standard assessments, scoring guides, or data.
- would be available to reviewers for reference when they review the next program report.
- should be limited in number in Part E of the national recognition report and address critical, global issues only.

National Recognition with Conditions

The program generally meets standards; however, one or more conditions must be remediated within 18 months to extend national recognition for the full 5-7 year accreditation period. The response to the conditions must be submitted within 18 months. Conditions could be the following:

- Insufficient data to determine if standards are met
- Insufficient alignment among standards and assessment or scoring guides
- Lack of quality in some assessments or scoring guides
- Not meeting SPA standards. Refer to SPA specific instructions
- Less than an 80% pass rate on state licensure examinations

Not Nationally Recognized

The program does not meet the standards in significant ways. Programs that are not nationally recognized will be cited as an AFI by the Board of Examiners team.

The **“Decision is Deferred”** has been eliminated.



PROGRAM REVIEW TIMELINE

Spring 2006

January 15 – Send Conflict of Interest and Availability form to program reviewers

March 1 – Notify program reviewers of assignments

March 1-April 15 – Program reviewers complete individual reports; lead reviewer completes final team report

April 15-June 1 – SPA audit teams review and finalize reports

June 1-June 30 – NCATE staff finalizes reports and posts reports to website

June 30 – NCATE notifies institutions that final reports are available

Fall 2006

August 30 – Send Conflict of Interest and Availability form to program reviewers

October 1 – Notify program reviewers of assignments

October 1-November 15 – Program reviewers complete individual reports; lead reviewer completes final team report

November 15-January 1 – SPA audit teams review and finalize reports

January 1-January 31 – NCATE staff finalizes reports and posts reports to website

February 1 – NCATE notifies institutions that final reports are available

CONTACT INFORMATION – *all NCATE staff can be reached at (202) 466-7496 or at the following:*



Deidre Alves
Accreditation Associate
Program Review
deidre@ncate.org



Margie Crutchfield
Associate Vice President
Program Review
Margie@ncate.org



Jaye Bishop
Accreditation Associate
Program Review
jaye@ncate.org



Frank Huang
System Support Assistant
Program Review
frank@ncate.org



SPA Reviewer BRAIN TEASER

Deidre Alves

Hypothetical situation:

It is November 2006 and you are reviewing a program report. The report details 8 assessments and provides rubrics for each of the assessments. The assessments and rubrics are adequately aligned with your SPA's standards. How many semesters of data would the program be required to submit in order to receive full national recognition? Recognition with conditions?

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The first 3 correct email responses that we receive will **WIN** a **FREE** copy of NCATE's latest publication:

**Spotlight on Schools of Education—Institutional Responses to NCATE Standards 1 and 2**  
by Antoinette Mitchell, Sheila Allen, and Pamela Ehrenberg.