The BOARD OF EXAMINERS UPDATE is designed to share the actions of the Unit Accreditation Board and refinements of NCATE’s review process. It is disseminated at the start of onsite visits in the fall and spring. Issues and changes reported here should be reviewed by team members during their first team meeting.
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DISPATCHES FROM DEB

Understanding what the Standards Require Versus what is Implied

Dear BOE colleagues,

I am about to dispense some unsolicited advice...I know. I know. I’ve got a lot of nerve to dispense advice when I am newly graduated from the BOE training of July 2011.

Nonetheless.

Let’s be careful about the difference between what the standards actually say and what may be implied, but not actually stated. Let me give you an example. Standard 5 (rubric for acceptable level in 5c: Modeling Best Professional Practices in Scholarship) states:

Most professional education faculty demonstrate scholarly work in their fields of specialization. They are engaged in different types of scholarly work, based in part on the missions of their units and institutions.

To some folks that may imply that “faculty need to be given the time they need to be sure they are able to publish in their fields of specialization.” Not necessarily so. As a BOE member sitting in an interview at XYZ institution where a few full-time faculty may be complaining about their workload and a lack of “support” for faculty scholarship, it is tempting, really tempting to write a statement or AFI about a workload that is too heavy in teaching credit hours. However, the BOE offsite and onsite reports need to address what a standard actually says. Even though faculty release or reassignment from a three-credit course in order to pursue school-based research may be a better practice than what you are observing or being told at XYZ institution, you can’t suggest it. NCATE standards do not set a credit hour minimum or maximum in teaching nor do the standards suggest a quantity of publications in the area of research or scholarship.

Here’s another example. Standard 2 (rubric for acceptable level in 2b: Data Collection, Analysis, and Evaluation) states:

Candidate assessment data are regularly and systematically collected, compiled, aggregated, summarized, and analyzed to improve candidate performance, program quality, and unit operations.

You may find data on spreadsheets or file cabinets scattered throughout ABC institution. But once or twice a year the faculty and administrators put everything together and review what they have in order to make improvement decisions. Even though you think it would be better if they had an electronic system to make collection, compilation, aggregation and summarization easier, you can’t suggest it. The standard does not explicitly state that this is a requirement. It may be implied, in your reading that an “assessment system” is defined in a particular way. But be careful. Pay attention to what a standard actually says, not what you think it implies.

Now, to some of you this may be so completely obvious as to not need explication. To others of you this may be a simple reminder. To all of you I ask you to believe that I write this for a reason. Please use your BOE colleagues and your BOE team chair as sounding boards and thought partners to distinguish a standard from its implications. Thank you and thank you again for doing so.
Happy offsite and onsite visits in 2012! Know that we value every minute of your time and every ounce of your effort. All of our words, however, are not enough to acknowledge our regard for your service to the profession of teaching.

Best wishes for an outstanding 2012,

Deb Eldridge, Senior Vice President

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT (CI) UPDATE

The New Accreditation Continuum
The new accreditation option of Continuous Improvement (CI) will take effect in fall 2012. One of the key features of the redesigned accreditation options is the synergistic combination of both formative and summative processes. Formative feedback is provided through the Offsite BOE Report derived from an offsite review meeting. Summative evaluation is conducted through an onsite visit with findings summarized in the Onsite BOE Report. This new accreditation continuum with defined milestones (Figure 1) for reports and feedback provides unit and examiners with more opportunities for interactions and clarifications on processes and expectations.

Consistency, coherency, and continuity of processes and reports are critical to ensuring the integrity, fidelity, and efficiency of the new accreditation options. When conducting the offsite review, the offsite team should focus holistically on the standards and consider whether clear, convincing, and sufficient evidence are provided. When preparing the Offsite BOE Report, the offsite team should address the standards holistically, summarizing evidence and preliminary findings in reference to elements that constitute the standards, articulate questions and concerns for further review and validation, and list evidence necessary for summative evaluation by the onsite team.

The onsite BOE team is charged with continuing, rather than duplicating, the work of the offsite BOE team. When conducting the onsite visit and preparing the BOE Report, the onsite team for a CI visit should focus on addressing Areas of Concern (AOC) and Areas for Improvement (AFI) noted in the Offsite BOE Report, validating movement toward and/or performance at the target level on selected standard(s), and corroborating evidence of continuous improvement on the remaining standards. Sample onsite visit schedule and report are available on NCATE website. The team for a CI visit should also articulate any additional concerns that arise during the onsite visit, and significant improvements/strengths related to the standards since the previous visit.

To maximize the rigor and fidelity of accreditation within the new accreditation continuum, the Unit Accreditation Board will officially adopt a new operation procedure to include review of the Offsite BOE Report (in addition to BOE Reports, Institutional Rejoinder, and Chair’s Response) in its audit and accreditation decision making process at the spring 2012 UAB meeting.
OFFSITE BOE REPORT UPDATE

Guidance on Requesting Evidence in the Offsite BOE Report

The Offsite BOE Report is part of an ongoing dialog between the BOE team and the unit. The unit has the first “say” through the Institutional Report (IR) and exhibits. The Offsite BOE Report shows that the team has reviewed the unit’s documents and understands the work being done to meet standards. The section Evidence for the Onsite BOE Team to validate during the onsite visit is the team’s request for follow up by the unit through the IR Addendum and onsite visit. A strong Offsite BOE Report including a clear list of evidence will make completing the review a smoother process for all parties.

There are a few points to keep in mind when deciding what evidence to request in this section of the Offsite BOE Report:

- The team must request evidence that addresses any continued areas for improvement (AFIs) and all areas of concern (AOCs).
- If the team does not see evidence of target level work on the standard selected by the unit for moving toward target, request evidence that might support the unit’s claim that they are moving to target on this standard.
- Evidence requested should help the unit confirm actual practice and support claims in the IR and exhibits.
- Only request evidence that addresses the standard. NCATE’s Exhibit List should be used as a guide for team’s request(s).
In most cases the list of evidence to be validated at the onsite visit will have three to eight items. It may be longer if the evidence provided in the IR and exhibits was limited.

A recommended format for writing the items is to **first state the general area to be addressed followed by clarifying question[s]**. The questions help the unit identify what documents they can provide or interview to arrange to help the team better understand their work. For example:

- Low response rate to the alumni and employer surveys. What is the unit doing to improve the response rates of these surveys?
- Faculty use of candidate performance data. What recommendations for the improvement of candidate performance did the faculty discuss? How does the unit plan to implement recommended changes?
- The use of the database for tracking of placements for field experiences and clinical practice for both initial and advanced candidates. How does the unit ensure that both initial and advanced candidates have varied experiences in settings with students from diverse groups?
- Operation of the unit assessment system. How does the assessment system work? What are the timelines for data collection? How are assessment data aggregated and analyzed? What reports are generated for whom?
- Data supporting the statement that candidates in all advanced programs can use technology in their practices. What assessments provide these data? How are candidates performing on those assessments?
- Work of the Assessment Committee. What are the charges and activities of the committee? What processes are in place to ensure that assessment are fair, accurate, consistent and free of bias? Faculty workload. How does supervision of field experiences figure into faculty loads? How do faculty perceive their current teaching, advising, and supervision loads? How do faculty perceive load impact on their productivity?
- Professional development activities. What are the goals of professional development for faculty? What activities does the unit provide on and off campus? How is professional development beyond attendance at a professional conference determined? How are professional development activities evaluated?

When necessary, items in the Evidence for the Onsite BOE Team to validate during the onsite visit section should note exhibits that the team was not able to access, request missing information, and ask for clarification of contradictory information.

- Link to exhibit 4.12a. This link is not accessible.
- Status of the state reports for 2010-11. They were not available in the electronic exhibit.
- Clarification of Key Assessment #1. The table reports a pass rate of 99 percent and the narrative mentions 64 percent (p. 6) and in another location 100 percent (p. 13).
- Clarification of advanced preparation programs. What programs are offered at the advanced level? What is the status of the joint doctoral degree described on the Graduate School web site?

When writing the Offsite BOE Report it is important to remember that it is the team’s feedback to the unit, and while it guides the onsite team’s work, the primary audience is the unit.
ONSITE REPORT UPDATE

Target or Strength?
The Onsite BOE Report template for the Continuous Improvement option has prompts for both Movement to the Target Level and Strengths under all standards. BOE teams are asked to complete Movement to the Target Level for the standard the unit selected as the target standard only. Any activities at the target level in other standards should be noted under the Strengths prompt. The Strengths prompt should not be answered for the target standard, or if there is no target-level activity on a non-target standard.

The Unit Accreditation Board is reviewing and developing further guidelines on expectations for moving toward the target level. Additional information will be available after their spring 2012 meeting.

Refresher on Areas for Improvement and Rationales
Areas for improvement (AFI) and rationales are key components of the Offsite and Onsite BOE reports. AFI s and their rationales serve two purposes: (1) assisting the unit and institution to improve practice, and (2) guiding the onsite BOE team and the Unit Accreditation Board in determining if a standard is met or not met. The rationale supports the AFI by describing the current conditions at the unit.

AFIs are standards-based, brief (usually one sentence), and state why the unit is not at the acceptable level. For example: The unit does not regularly and systematically collect and analyze candidate performance data to improve candidate performance, program quality, and unit operations. In this example the team is looking at Standard 2. The AFI is a declarative sentence describing activities at the unacceptable level of element 2b.

The corresponding rationale supports the AFI by explaining what findings lead the team to cite the AFI. The rationale is standards-based, more detailed than an AFI (could be as long as a few sentences), and describes the conditions found at the unit during the onsite visit. An appropriate rationale for the sample above would be: Assessment data are collected by programs and shared with individual faculty and candidates. However, there is no evidence that the data are aggregated or analyzed at the unit level to evaluate overall performance and inform improvements. Faculty acknowledged in interviews that, given its small size, the unit makes changes based predominately on informal discussions and anecdotal evidence.

There are a few Do’s and Don’ts to consider when writing AFIs and rationales. Because Areas for Concern (AOCs) in the Offsite Report may become AFIs onsite, they and their rationales follow the same rules. First, do not worry about being negative. But don’t be unduly harsh or abrupt. Because they identify work that is not up to standard, AFIs are negative statements. Do not generalize. Be careful with words such as “most,” “some,” and “not all.” If there are problems with “most” programs, the team could either list the programs (secondary education programs) or exclude the programs that are meeting standards (all programs except the secondary education programs). Do not tell the unit how to improve—the unit should purchase commercially available software to operate the assessment system—for example. Statements similar to this are prescriptive, do not guarantee success, and are not standards-based. Do not use the standard as the rationale. Standard 2 requires an assessment system is not an appropriate rationale. Instead explain what is not sufficient so the unit can make improvements. Do not include what the unit plans to do. Remember the onsite visit is a snapshot of what the unit is
doing now, and plans can change or be abandoned. If the rationale includes words such as “should,” “needs to,” “plans to,” or “will,” consider a rewrite.

The following are examples of inappropriate AFIs and rationales and how they can be rewritten:

**AFI is a neutral statement:** The unit faculty is 98 percent White, non-Hispanic.
**Revised AFI:** Candidates have limited opportunities to interact with faculty members from diverse backgrounds.

**AFI generalizes:** The unit does not ensure that candidates in some programs demonstrate the pedagogical knowledge necessary to help all students learn.
**Revised AFI:** The unit does not ensure that candidates, with the exception of elementary education program candidates, demonstrate the pedagogical knowledge necessary to help all students learn.

**AFI is prescriptive:** Publications should be current and accurate.
**Revised AFI:** The unit’s publications are not current and accurate.

**Rationale is prescriptive:** It is evident that school partners participate in the delivery and evaluation of field experiences and student teaching. However, the unit should establish a committee which includes these partners so they can participate in decisions regarding the design of field experiences and student teaching.
**Revised Rationale:** While it is evident that school partners participate in the delivery and evaluation of field experiences and student teaching, evidence provided does not confirm that school partners participate in decisions regarding the design of field experiences and student teaching.

**Rationale cites the standard:** At the acceptable level, a unit maintains records of formal complaints from candidates as well as documentation of their resolutions.
**Revised Rationale:** There is no evidence that the unit has a process for documenting candidate complaints or their resolutions.

**Rationale cites plans:** The new unit head has placed a priority on operational support, both financial and staffing, to adequately maintain and monitor the assessment system. There are plans to employ an assessment director effective fall 2012.
**Revised Rationale:** The unit does not currently have the operational support, both financial and staffing, to adequately maintain and monitor the assessment system.

AFIs should flow logically from the findings. After reading the team’s findings with statement of concerns, an AFI should not come as a surprise. Positive findings would lead the reader to assume there are no AFIs, while AFI(s) are suggested if there are negative statements in the findings. The unit can always rejoin if they disagree.

When making a recommendation of whether a standard is met teams should consider the number and severity of AFIs. The one AFI used as an example above may be serious enough for the team to recommend that Standard 2 is not met:

- **The unit does not regularly and systematically collect and analyze candidate performance data to improve candidate performance, program quality, and unit operations.**
Just as several, less consequential AFIs, may lead the team to question overall quality and recommend the standard as not met. Taken as a whole the following AFIs under Standard 2 indicate a serious problem, while individually they may not:

- The unit has not implemented procedures to ensure fairness, accuracy, and consistency of the assessment of candidate performance.
- Candidates’ assessment data are not shared and analyzed systematically by the unit and the professional community.
- Faculty are not regularly and systematically provided formative feedback based on the unit’s performance assessments.

Sample AFIs are available on the NCATE website. Teams are encouraged to go to: BOE › Writing the BOE Report › Writing the BOE Report – Resources, and review the list when writing AFIs.

**ONSITE VISIT UPDATE**

**Travel Advisory**
If your flight to or from an onsite visit is cancelled due to poor weather conditions or other travel glitches, please contact Gant to arrange for a new flight. During their normal business hours, Monday-Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Central Time, call (630) 227-3800. The after hours emergency number is 877-546-2406, reference WH6. This number should only be used if you need to rebook a flight after the normal business hours.

Gant agents monitor flight cancellations and changes due to inclement weather and may notify you if you need to change your flight. Make sure you have included contact information in your Cliqbook profile so Gant will be able to contact you if necessary.

Chairs who reschedule their travel or are delayed should notify the unit, as well as team members, of the change. Team members should notify the chair of changes and delays. If you need to rebook your flight, please work with Gant to find the most economical alternative which will get you to your destination without missing too much of the visit.

**State Protocols**
BOE chairs and teams are reminded to be respectful of the NCATE-State protocols. NCATE has negotiated protocols with 50 states including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. The protocols are agreements between NCATE and the state on how the review is conducted in that state. The protocol must be followed by the NCATE and state teams, and neither the NCATE nor State team chair has the authority to change any part of the agreement. Team members and team chairs should review the relevant protocol for the institutions they have been assigned to review. All State Protocols are available on the NCATE website at States › State Contacts and Protocols.

**TECHNOLOGY UPDATE**

**AIMS and the BOE Reports**
NCATE has established AIMS as the official data management system for all aspects of accreditation related reporting and documentations. AIMS must be used for all steps in the unit accreditation review
process to ensure accurate record keeping, consistency of review across units, and data security and confidentiality. Using other systems jeopardizes the integrity of the review.

Offsite team members are asked to upload their sections of the report in AIMS at least 48 hours prior to the offsite meeting. The staff member or affiliated editor assigned to the review will compile and post the full report in AIMS. Following the offsite review processes of reviewing, editing and revision, the final Offsite BOE Report should be made available to the unit within two weeks of the offsite meeting.

Onsite team members are asked to save (but not necessarily submit) their section(s) of the report in AIMS. It is critically important that the BOE team chair and members ensure that the first draft of the full BOE Report is available in AIMS prior to exiting the onsite visit, and accessible to all team members for revision and completion after the visit.

NCATE welcomes suggestions for improving the process, but, for the reasons cited, changes must go through NCATE staff before they can be implemented.

If the team experiences any difficulties with AIMS, please contact NCATE staff immediately:
- Victoria Jones, IT Assistant – victoria@ncate.org
- Stephanie Kowal, Assistant to the Vice President for Unit Accreditation – stephanie@ncate.org
- Patty Garvin, Accreditation Associate – patty@ncate.org
- NCATE main number – 202-466-7496

**STAFF UPDATE**

Please welcome our new staff members.

**Zachary Everett**, Communications Assistant/Executive Office Assistant. Zach recently worked as a Graduate Research Assistant for the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago offices in Bethesda, Maryland, surveying severely mentally ill patient populations to learn about the effectiveness of an educational intervention program for diabetes and cardiovascular health. Prior to this, he was based in Washington, D.C. working for the Job Corps program as a Property Specialist surveying campuses throughout the U.S. His duties at NCATE are split between the Communications Department working with Jane Leibbrand and the Executive Department working with Jim Cibulka, Wanda Beckett and Melissa Masterson. Zach holds a B.S. in Psychology with a minor in Spanish from Michigan State University. His email address is zach@ncate.org. Contact Zach if Jane Leibbrand or Melissa Masterson are unavailable.

**Monique Lynch**, Vice President for Program Review. Monique joined NCATE in October 2011. Previously she was the Senior Director of Professional Development and Accreditation at the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) designing, developing, and implementing Interactive Institutes, E-Workshops, E-Seminars, sustained professional development courses, and blended-delivery programs. As many of you know, Monique also represented NCTM as the SPA Coordinator for NCATE for seven years. Prior to her time at NCTM, Monique was an assistant professor of secondary mathematics instruction, author, and secondary mathematics teacher. Her email address is mlynch@ncate.org. Contact Monique if you have questions about program review.