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 on-site 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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Standards Update

Standard 2: Accuracy, Fairness, and Consistency

The first element of Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit Evaluation requires that the unit “takes effective steps to eliminate bias in assessments and is working to establish the fairness, accuracy and consistency of its assessment procedures and unit operations.” To address this aspect of the standards, BOE members should look for evidence such as when and how the unit develops and reviews assessments, how faculty and school partners are trained to use assessments, the degree of alignment between curricula and assessments, candidate knowledge about how assessments are scored, avoidance of cultural insensitivities, etc. A brief paper on this topic that is often shared with institutions is available on the NCATE website at: http://www.ncate.org/documents/articles/FairnessAccuracyConsistency.doc

Technology Update

Communicating through AIMS

The Accreditation Information Management System (AIMS) is becoming more integrated into the NCATE process. NCATE staff organize the site visit schedule and manage BOE teams in AIMS. Units and teams use it to write, submit, and review documents. When requests such as those to join a BOE team or to complete the conflict of interest form are sent to members through AIMS, BOE members are encouraged to respond through AIMS. After the visit, editing the BOE report and sharing it with staff and the unit are completed entirely in AIMS. The final report is then placed in the workspaces of UAB members. It is important for chairs to submit the Final BOE Report, even if the unit waives factual corrections and/or decides not to submit a rejoinder. AIMS is another tool for communicating and is not meant to completely replace phone calls and emails. BOE members are encouraged to contact NCATE staff directly with questions and concerns about completing and submitting reports in AIMS.

UAB Update

Team Chair’s Response to Rejoinders

The Unit Accreditation Board (UAB) strongly encourages team chairs to respond when units submit rejoinders. The UAB only has access to the institutional report, the BOE report, the institution’s rejoinder and the team chair’s response to the rejoinder. Without the chair’s response, UAB members are often left with contradictions among the reports, and are not able to determine if the team agrees with what is in the rejoinder. During the fall 2008 meeting, it was noted that, in many cases, the chair’s response is as important as the BOE report. A great deal of value is placed on the documents produced by the team and team chair. As the only NCATE representatives who have visited the institutions, BOE members are the “eyes and ears” of the UAB.

Spring 2009 Web Seminars

The following web seminars will be conducted for BOE chairs and other members on the days and times listed below:

Web Seminars for BOE Chairs:

Tuesday, January 27, 2009 at 3:30-4:30pm
Wednesday, January 28, 2009 at 4:00-5:00pm

Web Seminars for BOE Members:

Tuesday, February 3, 2009 at 2:00-3:00pm
Wednesday, March 11, 2009 at 4:00-5:00pm
Thursday, April 2, 2009 at 4:00-5:00pm
Monday, May 4, 2009 at 2:00-3:00pm

To register go to http://www.ncate.org/public/upcomingWebSeminars.asp and find the web seminar which you would like to attend. Click on “Register/More Information” and complete the registration
form. You can also register by clicking on “NCATE Professional Development Web Conference Series” on the right-hand side of NCATE’s home page (www.ncate.org).

**BOE Visits**

**Streamlining of Accreditation Continues**

NCATE continues to try to find ways to streamline the accreditation system so that it is more efficient, cost effective, and meaningful to institutions. In spring 2008, 34 institutions tested the use of a template for the institutional report (IR) that contained prompts for each element and required tables for the presentation of data. BOE teams that visited those institutions tested a new BOE report template in which they produced more concise reports, indicating the level (i.e., unacceptable, acceptable, or target) at which institutions were meeting each element, writing a brief narrative for each element, and citing strengths related to standards, where they existed.

Institutions with visits in fall 2008 used an Online Institutional Report form based on the template tested in spring 2008 to report how they addressed each standard element. Based on the feedback from institutions, the number of prompts in the Online IR has been reduced and, in some cases, the prompts rewritten for clarity. The revised Online IR is now open for use by institutions with visits in fall 2009 and spring 2010. Institutions during this academic year will also have the option to upload their IR as a Word document in AIMS rather than completing the Online IR. BOE teams wrote their reports in an online form, as well. Currently, the IR, BOE Report, rejoinder, and chair response are submitted through AIMS.

Some teams will test other streamlined procedures in spring 2009 visits, when the team chair, institutional representatives, and state representative agree to test one or more of them. First, the team chair may conduct the previsit via conference call or through the use of other technology rather than traveling to the institution for a face-to-face meeting. Secondly, poster sessions may or may not be included in the review. Thirdly, visits to P-12 schools by the BOE team members may be eliminated from the visit template, leaving the team more time for interviews on campus. Team members are still expected to interview teachers and principals in group interviews scheduled on or near campus. Finally, the BOE visit may begin mid-afternoon on Sunday and conclude by noon on Wednesday, eliminating most Friday and Saturday night arrivals. In these cases, team members will be expected to review the electronic exhibits before the on-site visit.

Two focused visits in spring 2009 will be conducted electronically. NCATE is collaborating with institutional representatives, team chairs, and state representatives to design a template for the virtual focused visit. These institutions will have all of their exhibits available to teams electronically. More details about these visits will be shared in the Fall 2009 BOE Update.

NCATE’s President, James E. Cibulka, was directed by the Executive Board in October 2008, to develop by its May 2009 meeting “a comprehensive set of recommendations for transformation and redesign of the NCATE accreditation and program review process, including focused, rigorous, developmental, cost-effective options and an estimate of additional costs and/or cost savings. The board encourages the president to initiate pilots and other measures as appropriate and to move forward as expeditiously as possible.” Staff is in the process of developing these recommendations and will be seeking feedback to them from all NCATE constituents, including BOE members. Please send your ideas and recommendations for further streamlining of the system to Donna M. Gollnick (donna@ncate.org).

**One Year Deferral of BOE Visits**

To ease some of the economic difficulties that many institutions are currently facing, NCATE’s Executive Board granted institutions the option of deferring on-site visits for one year, if the states in
which the institutions operate agree. The deferral option only applies to institutions with continuing and first visits. Deferrals are not available for focused and probation visits, or for submission of documentation to remove conditions or provisions. NCATE asked states to take the lead in identifying institutions that will defer their visits. States will provide NCATE with a comprehensive list of these institutions by January 31, 2009.

Currently 10 institutions that had spring 2009 visits scheduled opted to take the deferral. BOE chairs and members assigned to these institutions have already been notified that the visits will not take place. It is anticipated that all other spring 2009 visits will occur as scheduled. Team chairs and members will be notified if there are any changes.

BOE Travel

NCATE’s Executive Board has determined that all NCATE-related travel should be booked through the NCATE travel agency, Experient. When booking flights, please use the travel code for the semester of the visit. Travel codes are located in the email sent to chairs and BOE team members confirming acceptance of assignments. Experient will find flights at the lowest cost available. If you cannot accept the flights being proposed by Experient, please provide the rationale so that approval decisions can be made rapidly.

A copy of NCATE’s revised Travel Policies, including instructions for how to book through Experient, may be found at http://www.ncate.org/documents/policies/TravelPolicies10105.pdf. Travel booked through another agency after March 15, 2009 will not be reimbursed by NCATE. An email broadcast regarding this change will be sent in early February.

Interacting with Unit Faculty and Administrators

“...(T)wo of the team members were difficult and unprofessional...the others were professional and pleasant in their interactions.” This is one comment made by a unit in the evaluation of its BOE team. Although complaints about difficult relations between the unit and the team are rare, when they occur, they become the lasting impression the unit faculty and staff have of NCATE. These impressions are often shared with colleagues.

All team members are responsible for acting in a professional manner and keeping their discussions with the unit focused on the standards. The goal should be to work with the unit to provide an objective review of how it is meeting the standards. The team chair can set a tone of cooperation by being as transparent as possible, seeking clarity when issues arise, and encouraging the unit faculty and staff to ask questions and air concerns during the visit. Many chairs meet regularly with the unit head during the visit to discuss the team’s work and alert him or her of any concerns that may have arisen. This gives the unit the opportunity to provide ongoing feedback and to better understand the work and findings of the team.

Units are under a great deal of stress during the visit, so teams should be careful about making too many requests for additional documents. Members should discuss the need for additional documentation with the team chair, who can then request the information from the appropriate institutional representatives. This not only reduces the number of individual requests, it allows the chair to ask “Why?” That simple question can lead to a discussion of exactly what is needed. The requested information may be available in an exhibit the team member has not seen, or it may be decided that the request goes beyond what is needed to determine if a standard is met.

Also, team members should not request personal preferences for food and beverages unless the preference is related to health concerns. These requests, when not related to a health concern, place undue burdens on the institutions.
The First BOE Team Meeting

At the first BOE team meeting during the visit, the team should review new NCATE policies and procedures related to conducting the visit. Documents posted in AIMS under BOE Resources will help guide the discussions. The team should review together the latest BOE Update for clarifications to NCATE policies. Even if members read the Update when it was first posted, reviewing it with the entire team will ensure that everyone has the same understanding. The state consultant usually provides an overview of the state’s protocol. If he or she is not available, the team chair should do this. The team should review the Code of Conduct, paying particular attention to the sections on bias, compensations and gifts, and confidentiality. At the first team meeting, the team should discuss preliminary findings from the planning instrument), which should have been completed by each team member before the visit. The team should then work together to plan how to gather and record the data needed to produce the BOE report.

Using Unit Resources Wisely

Please keep in mind the financial constraints that units are facing when reviewing online exhibit rooms. Overuse of unit resources, including paper and ink, and the wear and tear on printers and copiers can unnecessarily increase the cost of the visit. Team members should plan to complete as much work as possible online. NCATE does not require units to provide both electronic and paper documentation, so BOE members are asked to severely limit printing online exhibits during the visit.

There may be some documents members will refer to often. For these documents, BOE members may want a paper copy. Even in these cases, however, the entire document will probably not need to be printed. Before printing, skim the document in order to determine where there is relevant information. If the document does not have clues such as subheadings or different fonts to help a reader locate the information, search for a few keywords and phrases. If useful information is found, that section of the document can be printed by selecting either “current page” or a range of pages before sending it to the printer. Limiting the use of unit resources, including staff time, will help to support good relations.

Institutional Evaluations of BOE Teams

Each semester institutions are asked to evaluate BOE team members and chairs immediately after the site visit. Now that evaluations are done online, the response rate has greatly increased. During spring 2008, 50 out of 64 institutions submitted evaluations of 184 team members, and 53 institutions submitted evaluations of chairs. The results show that institutions have an overall positive view of BOE teams. On a scale of “not effective” (1) to “very effective” (5), the mean score for members and chairs was above 4.5 on all items.

The evaluations cover familiarity with the institutional report and NCATE standards, as well as interpersonal and interview skills. The following comments reflect the teams’ abilities to conduct site visits in a constructive manner:

“(The BOE member) had prepared well prior to the site visit and asked specific questions for specific purposes. Her commend of knowledge both with the standards and understanding of the IR, combined with her professionalism established a sense of respect among (the college’s) faculty for her, her professionalism and the job she was conducting.”

“I appreciated his willingness to share insights into the process to create transparency for our faculty.”

“She asked probing questions that demonstrated familiarity with our institutional report. She set a positive context for conducting group interviews.”

In addition, chairs are evaluated on communication with the unit and leadership skills. Some of the comments received were:

“The BOE Team Chair directed the focused visit with genuine concern for fairness and respect for all involved.”
“During the visit, it was clear that she was very familiar with all of our published materials. This enabled her to lead her team effectively in analyzing our supporting evidence.”

BOE Reports

Writing the Overall Assessment of the Standard and Strengths

The new BOE report format requires more succinct writing, while still providing enough information to make the report a stand-alone document. In the summary of findings for each element, BOE teams provide information from the multiple sources of evidence they examined, including summarized data from the institutional report (IR). When referring to data in the IR, teams should indicate the page number where the data can be found. Data from the IR, however, should not be the only source of evidence cited for a particular component of the standards.

Team members are expected to write an Overall Assessment of how the unit addressed the standard at the end of each standard section. Even with the shorter BOE Report format, the UAB finds this brief summary of the findings very helpful. The BOE teams may also find this section useful to double check that they are in agreement about their recommendations. The Overall Assessment statement should address each element of the standard and should not be more than a few sentences in length. The statement should reflect both the positive aspects of the unit’s work, as well as the areas for improvement the team found.

Based on the spring 2008 pilot BOE Reports, the UAB decided that the Strengths section should be used to highlight work units are doing that is related to the standards at the target level of the rubric. This is the only optional section of the report. When a team designates an element at the target level, a brief explanation of the target-level work would be appropriate in the Strengths section of the report. Also, if the team finds that the unit is at the target level for some aspects of an element, then a strength should be noted. The Strengths section should not include work being done at the acceptable or unacceptable level.

UAB Evaluation of BOE Reports: New vs. Old Template

Because the new, streamlined BOE report template and the previous template were both used during the spring 2008 visits, the UAB was able to evaluate reports in both formats when they met October 2008. Thirty-four teams used the new template, and 30 used the previous template. Reports in the new template scored lower on all items. Some of the differences in scores may be due to the newness of the instrument. However, BOE members should keep in mind that reports still must provide sufficient information and analysis to support a recommendation of met or not met. The summaries in the online BOE Report should clearly indicate why the team indicated that the standard element was being addressed at the unacceptable, acceptable, or target level. A few items to pay attention to are: providing sufficient background in the introduction and conceptual framework sections, making sure each element is adequately addressed at all applicable levels, stating when evidence was not available, writing clear areas for improvement, and supporting areas for improvement in the findings.

The table on the following page shows the scores for the spring 2008 reports, evaluated in October 2008, disaggregated by template.

Comparison by Report Template [scale = 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree)]
1. The report was adequately edited
2. The introduction and conceptual framework sections were sufficiently informative.
3. The report incorporated evidence that adequately addressed each element of the standards, including elements related to advanced programs.
4. The report included a clear presentation and synthesis of evidence.
5. The report presented the evidence in enough detail to “make the case” for its findings in the narrative.
6. The report included recommendations that were derived logically from the narrative and areas for improvement.
7. The report drew on multiple sources of evidence.
8. The report stated when sufficient evidence was not available for review.
9. The areas for improvement that were cited were clearly stated.
10. The report was internally consistent—i.e., it did not include contradictory information.
11. The report placed comments, concerns, and areas for improvement related to the conceptual framework under the appropriate standards.
12. The report made distinctions between initial and advanced programs.
13. The report addressed the areas for improvement that were cited.
14. The report explained why areas for improvement were not cited when the evidence discussed could presumably lead a team to cite areas for improvement.
15. The report adequately addressed previously cited weaknesses/areas for improvement.
16. The report did not include prescriptive statements and/or opinions not related to the standards.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Streamlined Template Spring 2008 Reports N=34</th>
<th>Previous Template Spring 2008 Reports N=30</th>
<th>Both Templates Spring 2008 Reports N=64</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The report was adequately edited</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
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<td>2. The introduction and conceptual framework sections were sufficiently informative.</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.27</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. The report incorporated evidence that adequately addressed each element of the standards, including elements related to advanced programs.</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.20</td>
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<td>4. The report included a clear presentation and synthesis of evidence.</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.02</td>
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<td>5. The report presented the evidence in enough detail to “make the case” for its findings in the narrative.</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.91</td>
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<td>6. The report included recommendations that were derived logically from the narrative and areas for improvement.</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.18</td>
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<td>7. The report drew on multiple sources of evidence.</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.51</td>
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<td>8. The report stated when sufficient evidence was not available for review.</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>3.16</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The areas for improvement that were cited were clearly stated.</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. The report was internally consistent—i.e., it did not include contradictory information.</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.05</td>
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<td>11. The report placed comments, concerns, and areas for improvement related to the conceptual framework under the appropriate standards.</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.08</td>
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<td>12. The report made distinctions between initial and advanced programs.</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. The report addressed the areas for improvement that were cited.</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.09</td>
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<td>14. The report explained why areas for improvement were not cited when the evidence discussed could presumably lead a team to cite areas for improvement.</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.61</td>
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<td>15. The report adequately addressed previously cited weaknesses/areas for improvement.</td>
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<td>16. The report did not include prescriptive statements and/or opinions not related to the standards.</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>3.38</td>
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</tbody>
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**Staff Update**

**Monica Minor’s Departure**

Monica Minor, accreditation association, left NCATE in December to pursue other professional opportunities in higher education. Along with her other duties, Monica contributed to the state and national Board of Examiners’ trainings. We wish her well.