*** Board of Examiners Update ***

Fall 2001

The BOARD OF EXAMINERS UPDATE is designed to share with BOE members 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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UAB Reviews First Round of Pilot Visits Under New Standards

At its March 2001 meeting, the UAB made decisions on the first round of NCATE 2000 pilot visits conducted in fall 2000. Of the 13 pilot institutions reviewed, 9 were granted continuing accreditation, one was denied accreditation. Action was deferred on two institutions until the October UAB meeting, to allow the institutions additional time to respond to an unmet standard. One was granted accreditation with conditions.

BOE team members who have conducted visits under the new standards report that the team report is longer and requires more time to write because the level of detail and need for data have increased. This can be a problem in the case of 3 person NCATE-only teams, especially when a team member cancels at the last minute. On joint visits with a state, state team members can be paired with NCATE members to prepare responses to the standards. Most team members indicate that it is extremely difficult for one team member alone to write a response to Standard 1. Therefore, the UAB has adopted a policy, effective for fall 2002 visits, that will allow NCATE to increase the size of BOE teams on NCATE-only visits and in states with concurrent visits. These teams may range in size from 5-8 members, depending on the size of the institution and the number and type of programs offered.

After reviewing the first round of BOE reports for pilot visits under the new standards, the UAB has made the following recommendations for writing BOE reports:
In the “Findings” section of the report,

- the narrative should use the headings that correspond to the elements of the rubrics
- provide an “Overall Assessment of Standard” at the end of each standard’s narrative (a one paragraph summary of the findings for the standard)
- whenever data are available, provide the data in the BOE report
- when indicating that the unit uses journals, portfolios, etc. for assessing candidates, describe the contents and purpose of these artifacts - - what knowledge, skills or dispositions are they intended to demonstrate? How are they assessed? By whom? What are the results of the assessments?

Weakness statements should be performance/outcome-oriented whenever possible, especially for Standard 1:

**INADEQUATE:** “Not all programs meet the guidelines of the specialty organizations.” (Be specific about which programs & the impact on candidate performance)

*Rationale:* Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education did not receive approval by their respective specialty organizations.

**BETTER:** “Candidates in Elementary Education and Early Childhood Education are not able to adjust instruction for exceptional learners.”

*Rationale:* Reviews by the specialty organizations indicated inadequate attention to inclusion in the curriculum. Interviews with candidates and cooperating teachers confirmed that candidates had difficulty in creating learning experiences for exceptional learners.

- weakness statements should be followed by a brief rationale that summarizes information from the “Findings” section that supports the weakness (similar to continuing accreditation BOE reports under old standards).
- Conceptual framework weaknesses — new or continued — should be included under the standard to which it is most closely related.

The template for the BOE report which can be downloaded from NCATE’s website has been revised (as of 8/01). Team members should be sure they are downloading and using the most up to date template. See “BOE Materials on Redesigned Website” below.

The UAB also decided that beginning with fall 2001 visits, team chairs will receive a copy of the unit’s rejoinder before the UAB decision is made. The team chair will have the opportunity to respond to the rejoinder. The chair’s response will be provided to
the UAB. This action was taken in response to concerns that institutions may sometimes provide data or evidence in the rejoinder that were not available to the team at the time of the visit. It is hoped that the chair’s response will help aid the UAB in the decision-making process, particularly in situations where an audit committee may be considering removing or adding a weakness.

Faculty Scholarship

The new NCATE standards continue to require higher education faculty to be engaged in scholarly activity. When applying the standards related to faculty scholarship, BOE members should take into account the type and mission of the institution being reviewed. The types of scholarship expected from faculty can differ depending on the institutional context. It is expected that faculty, especially graduate faculty, at a research university would be engaged in conducting research, generating new knowledge, and publishing these findings in refereed journals. At an undergraduate institution whose mission is primarily teaching, faculty scholarship may take the form of “applied research.” For example, faculty may be engaged in assisting local schools in integrating current research into practice, or may be serving state education agencies in developing and applying standards. Also, faculty are engaged in using research in teaching and learning to improve their own teaching practice. Scholarship presupposes submission of one’s work for professional review and evaluation.

BOE Materials on Redesigned Website

The NCATE website (http://www.ncate.org) has been redesigned. Most of the materials needed for the conduct of a BOE visit are available for downloading from the website. Click on the “Board of Examiners,” link on the home page (on the left), then go to “BOE On-site visit materials.”

BOE materials will no longer be broken down by role, i.e. – team chair, team member, state team, observer, etc., or by type of visit – initial, continuing, probation, etc. Under the new standards, the materials are substantially the same for initial, continuing, and probation visits, and most of the same materials will be used by all NCATE and state team members. Where a particular item is specific to a particular role or particular type of visit, this will be noted in the description for the item on the website.

The following materials are not available on the web, and will continue to be mailed to team members: Action Report (decision by UAB), trend data, annual reports, and the 3rd Year Report; BOE team list; “Intent to Seek” form (BOE team chairs only); transparencies (BOE team chairs only); expense voucher and return envelope.
Web-Based Training Module For New Standards

BOE members who did not attend a training session on the new NCATE standards in 2000 or 2001 are expected to complete the web-based training module. The module may also be used as a “refresher” course for those already trained in the new standards. It is expected that the module will be available in October; all BOE members will be notified when it becomes available.

The training module is comprised of individual modules for the conceptual framework and each of the standards. Each module consists of an overview and explanation of the conceptual framework or a standard, and includes a series of tasks or exercises to be completed based on the reading of an abstracted IR that is provided. The abstracts describe a unit’s conceptual framework, or evidence for meeting a particular standard. Tasks include: rating the information provided in the IR abstract, much like using the planning instrument to determine where more information is needed; developing follow-up questions that need to be asked on campus; identifying sources of evidence that can provide more information; reading and analyzing two BOE report responses to each standard or the conceptual framework. As each task is completed, the module will provide feedback so that BOE members can compare their findings.

BOE members who have not yet been retrained must complete the web training before being assigned to a team. In the spring 2002 semester, there will be nearly eighty on-site visits, therefore, almost all BOE members will be needed in the spring to conduct visits. Assignments for spring 2002 visits will begin in September.

The Relationship Between Standards 1 & 2

The relationship between Standard 1 and Standard 2 is symbiotic. Standard 1 requires data that demonstrates candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Standard 2 requires a detailed description of the system that produces the data required in Standard 1 and other data collected by the unit.

The relationship becomes a little complicated because of the NCATE Transition Plan, which gives institutions several years to put an assessment system into place. If the system required by Standard 2 is not yet in place, then we cannot realistically expect data derived from that system to be available as evidence for meeting Standard 1. However, the Transition Plan indicates that, at a minimum, institutions should have some performance data available for the team as evidence for Standard 1, regardless of the year in which the visit takes place. This information should include state test scores, where applicable; studies (often surveys) of graduates and employers regarding candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions; assessments of candidate performance during clinical experiences and internships; and SPA (specialized professional association) reports and/or state program reports, where applicable. Institutions can supplement these data with other assessments. Together the data should suggest that candidates are successfully completing the programs.
The Transition Plan requires that institutions have an assessment system plan in place to systematically gather an array of candidate performance data, and data about unit operations. This plan should be articulated in response to Standard 2. The plan must provide a means of collecting data on candidate knowledge, skills, and dispositions outlined Standard 1, and should address all of the elements in Standard 2. The plan must include: major transition points; assessment measures; timelines; the design for data collection, analysis, summary, and use; information on unit operations; and some indication of how technology will be used in the maintenance of the system. The Transition Plan specifies year-by-year, how far along a unit should be in implementing its assessment system. See the Transition Plan and Assessment Systems: An Explanation of the NCATE Transition Plan, a paper on the NCATE website, under links for Accreditation Procedures or Research and Resources, for further details.

To meet Standards 1 and 2, units must: have data that demonstrate that candidates have the appropriate knowledge, skills and dispositions; have an assessment system plan that includes the components described above; and be implementing that plan in accordance with the timeline in the NCATE Transition Plan.

**Student Learning**

The last elements of Standard 1 involve student learning. At the acceptable level, the rubric in the NCATE unit standards indicates that institutions must demonstrate that candidates focus on student learning as shown in their assessment of student learning, use of assessments in instruction, and development of meaningful learning experiences. Institutions can meet this level of proficiency by presenting data on: candidate knowledge about assessment and assessment techniques; candidate knowledge about using assessment data to adjust, refine, or revise pedagogy; and candidate learning on creating classroom experiences that are relevant, engaging, and appropriate.

At the target level, the rubric in the NCATE unit standards indicates that teacher candidates accurately assess and analyze student learning, make appropriate adjustments to instruction, monitor student learning, and have a positive effect on learning for all students. Institutions can demonstrate this higher level of proficiency by presenting the data mentioned above and any other data that suggest the systematic positive impact of its candidates on student learning. For example, a unit operating at the target level might present systematic data from classrooms where candidates are placed that demonstrate increased language arts skills for K–12 students.
Clarification of Diversity Standard

In response to questions from institutions and BOE members, the UAB has offered the following clarifications to Standard 4: Diversity:

Is diversity of faculty and candidates still an expectation of the standard?

Yes, diversity of faculty and candidates is an expectation of the standard.

Does the UAB still expect teams to report numbers in regard to diversity?

Teams should describe the diversity that exists among candidates, faculty, and P–12 students with whom candidates work. The description should include statistics about this diversity to help provide a context. In addition, it is helpful for teams to describe the area/region from which the unit recruits candidates, and to provide an indication of where graduates go.

The BOE should describe the experiences provided by the unit for candidates to help them develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help all students learn. Results of assessments that show that these experiences actually help candidates develop the appropriate knowledge, skills, and dispositions would strengthen the IR and the BOE report.

If the unit creates experiences — summer programs, visiting scholars, lecture series, etc.—can these be sufficient to meet the intent of the standard?

It is not enough just for the unit to provide these experiences. The experiences must be on-going activities that are regularly offered. The unit would have to demonstrate that all candidates participate and that the experiences contribute to the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to diversity.

If “good faith efforts” are being made to recruit and retain diverse faculty and candidates, but there are no results, should a weakness still be cited?

A weakness should be cited if diversity does not exist, even though plans have been developed and efforts have been undertaken. The good faith efforts should be described in the BOE report, but a weakness should be cited if no results have been achieved.

If candidate and faculty diversity is limited or non-existent, but the unit meets the expectations in the first element “Design, Implementation and Evaluation of Curriculum and Experiences” is the standard met?

The answer depends upon the experiences being provided by the unit. It is possible for a unit to compensate for the lack of faculty and candidate diversity through other
experiences such as having a visiting professor join the faculty on an annual basis, inviting community representatives to be an active part of courses and other activities, interacting with persons from diverse backgrounds through active involvement in diverse community settings for a significant period of time – in an urban area, on an Indian reservation – in an area with many recent immigrants. Consequently, the standard could be met under certain circumstances.

If the unit is diverse, but the unit does not meet the expectation of the first element of standard 4, is the standard met?

No, the standard is not met. The unit must demonstrate that candidates have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to help all students learn.

Revisions To Unit Standards

As a result of NCATE’s U.S. Department of Education (DOE) reauthorization review, NCATE is required to make some changes to its standards in order to comply with federal regulations on accrediting agency standards. The revisions to the standards and rubrics are intended to clarify their meaning, but will not change the meaning or expectations of the standards themselves. The proposed changes and an explanation for these changes can be viewed on NCATE’s website under the link on the homepage “Proposed Modifications to NCATE Unit Standards.”

The proposed modifications were approved by the Unit Accreditation Board in March. Pending the NCATE Standards Committee’s review of feedback to the revisions at their October 2001 meeting, the proposed modifications will become effective in Spring 2002. BOE members may comment on the proposed revision by e-mail to pam@ncate.org, until October 1, 2001.

BOE Code of Conduct

In 1999, NCATE adopted a “Code of Conduct” for all NCATE board members. The new code consolidated various policies and guidelines governing the conduct of NCATE board members, including BOE members. The Code is available on the NCATE website, under the link to materials for BOE teams. BOE members are in particular reminded of guidelines pertaining to gifts/gratuities and expectations for hospitality from the unit:

1. Board of Examiners (BOE) members shall not request or accept any gifts of substance from the institution being reviewed or anyone affiliated with the institution. (Gifts of substance would include briefcases, tickets to athletic or entertainment events. . .)
• If the giving of small tokens is important to an institution’s culture, BOE members may accept these tokens from the institution. (Tokens might include, for example, coffee mugs, key chains, tee shirts…)

• If unsure, the BOE member should err on the side of declining gifts of any kind.

2. BOE members shall not expect elaborate hospitality during previsits or visits.

• Institutions are not expected to arrange for dinner for teams, except for the Sunday night dinner with institutional representatives. It is appropriate for institutions to provide snacks and non-alcoholic beverages for teams as they conduct their work on campus and at their hotel. Where options for meals are limited, the BOE team chair shall make arrangements in advance with the institution for team meals.

3. BOE members shall use restraint in any expenditures charged to the campus being visited, and shall abide by the guidelines set forth in NCATE’s Travel Reimbursement Policy.

A number of institutions have reported that BOE teams have expectations for receiving “gift baskets” or other amenities or gratuities. While the team chair should discuss the options for team meals or snacks at the previsit, BOE members should not ask for or expect elaborate meals, gifts, or gratuities of any kind. At times an institution, because of its culture of hospitality, may provide the team with small tokens or souvenirs of the unit. Some institutions have budgets that will allow them to offer more elaborate hospitality than others. Exceptional hospitality or amenities offered by one institution should not lead to expectations for the same at the next institution visited. Comments to institutional personnel comparing hospitality or gifts offered by another institution are inappropriate. Team members should also avoid making such comparisons with their teammates, especially in conversations that may be overheard in public areas.

Changes in NCATE Accreditation Staff

NCATE welcomes a new accreditation staff member, Pamela Ehrenberg. Pamela is taking over the responsibilities for Wendy Wiggins, who is now coordinating the program review process. She will be sharing responsibility, with Pam Magasich, for reviewing draft BOE reports, as well as assisting with BOE trainings and UAB meetings. Pamela has worked for the National School Boards Association, and has been an English teacher in the DC public schools; she is currently pursuing a Master’s in Education at George Washington University.