Board of Examiners Update

Spring 2001
CURRENT BOE UPDATE—Spring 2001

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Spring 2000
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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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BoE UPDATE is also available on NCATE’s website at http://ncate.org/accred/boevisit/m_boevisit.htm#boe_updates

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PROGRAM REVIEWS

Program reviews by specialized professional associations (SPAs) and states are critical data to be examined by BOE teams during an on-site visit. They provide evidence for NCATE 2000 Standard 1: Candidate Performance and the current Standard I.C. Programs that do not meet SPA or state standards (especially programs placed on probation by the state) require additional scrutiny by BOE teams.

Other pieces of evidence may or may not support results of national program reviews. For example, a review that indicates a program has not met specialty area standards is not the end of the story - it should be a starting point for BOE teams to ask questions and look for other data. Keeping in mind that program reviews are paper reviews, there may be other evidence that what is unmet on paper may not be the case in practice. What competencies are not being met according to the program review? Teams should follow-up by asking candidates questions to determine if they are developing the expected competencies, and by asking cooperating teachers or clinical supervisors about candidate performance in these areas. Test score data or data from other assessments will provide additional information about candidate competencies in these areas.

Non-compliance with specialty organization program standards should not automatically lead to the citation of a weakness without further corroborating evidence. In some instances, units are found not to meet specialty standards because of a
technicality—not completing the paperwork correctly, or exceeding page limits, for example; such technicalities are unrelated to candidate performance and cannot be used as a basis for citing a weakness. Some units may not have completed the program review process at the time of the visit and may be in the rejoinder stage. They are expected to have the rejoinder available for review by the team. Incomplete program reviews also cannot be used a basis for citing weaknesses.

Teams must describe the specific concerns raised in program reviews and the reasons underlying program weaknesses. The weaknesses cited in program reviews may be appropriate to restate in the BOE report. Teams must also describe other evidence that either confirms or refutes the program review findings. When candidate performance reflects deficiencies described in program reviews, the weakness cited should be specific to the knowledge or competency that candidates are not adequately demonstrating, rather than merely a general statement that a certain program did not meet the specialty area guidelines. On the other hand, if the team is convinced that other evidence refutes a negative program report, it should ensure that the BOE report contains enough information to justify the team’s decision not to cite a weakness.

And, while a unit may meet specialty area standards, other data may suggest that candidates have not mastered all the knowledge and skills in the standards. In these cases, again, weaknesses should be cited that are specific to the competencies that candidates are not adequately demonstrating.

THE PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION UNIT

The professional education unit is the school, college, or department or other administrative body within the institution that is primarily responsible for the preparation of teachers and other school personnel. NCATE policy states that not all programs for the preparation of school personnel need to be administratively located within the unit (Standards, Procedures and Policies, 1997, p.7). Teams may find, for example, a school psychology program located within the graduate school, or a music education program located within a school of music. Both the current and the NCATE 2000 governance standards expect that the unit effectively coordinates or manages all programs that prepare school personnel, and that there is collaboration between unit faculty and faculty who teach programs outside the unit. Programs outside the unit should reflect the unit’s mission and conceptual framework(s), and the unit should serve a coordinating role for these programs, ensuring that education candidates are meeting expected professional, state, and institutional standards. While it is unlikely that the professional education unit will have full control over education programs housed in other departments or schools, weaknesses are warranted when the unit’s conceptual framework has not been shared with faculty and candidates outside the unit, when there is no formal way for education faculty within and outside the unit to communicate and collaborate, or when the unit has no input into the design, implementation, evaluation and revision of education programs outside the unit. However, the mere fact that some education programs are housed outside of the unit is not in itself a weakness. Teams should be investigating the nature of the relationship between the professional education
unit and education programs housed outside the unit, and the unit’s capacity to ensure the preparation of quality candidates across the institution.

**WRITING WEAKNESS STATEMENTS TO REFLECT IMPACT OF THE WEAKNESS**

Weakness statements related to faculty teaching and supervision loads, and use of part-time faculty — issues related to “quantities” — should focus on the impact of the weakness, rather than merely stating that loads or numbers of faculty are “excessive.” For example, rather than stating “Faculty loads exceed nine and twelve semester hours,” the weakness should convey the impact heavy loads have on faculty: “Heavy teaching loads prevent faculty from being engaged in scholarship and service.” Or, “Heavy faculty supervision loads have resulted in inadequate supervision for many candidates.”

It is possible that faculty in a unit may carry more than nine and twelve semester hours and yet be sufficiently involved in scholarship and service, or that faculty may supervise more than 18 candidates and still provide adequate supervision and feedback to those candidates. However, when faculty responsibilities do exceed the recommended limits, the team report should convey this information, as well as its reasons for citing, or not citing, weakness in this area. A weakness should not be cited merely because numbers in an indicator or rubric have been exceeded; there should be evidence of a negative impact upon faculty, candidates, or programs, which should be reflected in the weakness statement.

While NCATE does not specify the number of part-time faculty that may be employed, current Standard IV.A and NCATE 2000 Standard 6 do specify that the use of adjunct faculty must not negatively impact the quality, integrity and continuity of unit programs. Rather than stating that “There is a heavy reliance on part-time faculty,” or “the use of part-time faculty is excessive,” the weakness statement should indicate the negative impact of a large number of part-time faculty. For example: “Heavy reliance on part-time faculty has resulted in unevenness in program quality and in the integration of the unit’s conceptual framework across programs.” Moreover, the BOE report should provide evidence that excessive use of part-time faculty does, in fact, impact program quality. In some cases, however, units may employ significant numbers of adjunct faculty but provide them with sufficient training and support that there is no harm to the integrity and quality of their programs.

**NCATE 2000 TRAINING**

Approximately 80 BOE members who are current team chairs or who have been recommended as chairs will be invited to a June training for the NCATE 2000 standards. Web-based training for the new standards is also being developed. BOE members who do not participate in the June training will be asked to participate in the web-based training later in the summer.
TEAM MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES FOR ADDRESSING STANDARDS

When assigning team responsibilities for writing to standards or categories, team chairs are reminded that BOE members are not expected to be “experts” in certain standards or standards categories based on their professional role, or background, etc. It is expected that team members will gain experience in gathering information and writing to all the standards over the course of their BOE term. However, some BOE members of color have reported that they are almost always assigned to collect data related to diversity standards. Team chairs are cautioned against automatically assigning diversity issues to the minority member on the team. By the same token, BOE members should not seek to become “experts” in any particular standard, and should not always request to be assigned primary responsibility for the same standard(s) at every visit.

BOE UPDATES ON WEB

In addition to this current issue of BOE Update, by the end of January, highlights from previous BOE Updates will also be available on NCATE’s website. The current BOE Update and past highlights can be accessed under the homepage links for On-Site Visit Materials and BOE Materials for NCATE 2000 Visits. All BOE members, especially members trained within the past year, are encouraged to review past BOE Updates to remind themselves of important issues in applying NCATE standards and procedures. The next Update will appear in September.
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Both the current standards and the NCATE 2000 standards expect the unit’s conceptual framework to be shared and articulated among members of the professional community, including candidates, cooperating teachers and clinical supervisors. In seeking information about the conceptual framework from candidates and cooperating teachers or clinical supervisors, BOE members should be aware that these individuals may not be familiar with the term “conceptual framework.” They should not necessarily be expected to repeat a theme or slogan, “Teacher as Reflective Decision Maker,” for example, but should be able to describe the unit’s vision for preparing school personnel, what the unit values, what type of educator the unit seeks to prepare, and what outcomes the unit expects for its candidates. By the same token, being able to state the theme is not necessarily an indication of an understanding of the conceptual framework.

Therefore, in interviews with candidates and cooperating teachers and other non-higher education faculty, BOE members are cautioned against simply asking, “What is the conceptual framework?” Rather, BOE members should ask questions that will elicit responses that demonstrate an understanding of the unit’s objectives in preparing school personnel. For example: What type of teacher/principal/counselor, etc. does the unit seek to prepare? What knowledge and skills should a graduate of the unit demonstrate? What would distinguish a graduate of this institution from graduates of another institution? What do you believe the unit values, or believes is important, in the preparation of educators? Candidates might be asked to provide examples of how their courses and experiences have helped them to acquire the knowledge, skills and dispositions that the unit expects of its graduates. Cooperating teachers/clinical supervisors might be asked in what ways they help candidates acquire these knowledge and skills, and what support or professional development the unit has provided to non-higher education faculty to help them understand the unit’s mission and objectives.
FACULTY SCHOLARSHIP

Both the current NCATE standards and the NCATE 2000 draft standards 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” or service on the local and state level. 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.

ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS

NCATE is relying more and more on communicating with BOE members and institutions via e-mail. With an increasing number of institutions setting up electronic exhibit rooms, and putting institutional reports on-line, access to e-mail and the Web will be essential in conducting future NCATE-visits. The transition to electronic communications has been made or is well under way in several areas:

E-TICKETS REQUIRED

BOE members should expect NCATE’S travel agent to issue e-tickets. You will receive an e-mail or fax itinerary as a confirmation. BOE members are strongly discouraged from insisting on paper tickets, as there is a substantial charge for shipping these tickets, which is passed along to the institution.

BOE members have the option of using their own travel agent. If you purchase an airline ticket through your own travel agent, please submit the receipt with your travel voucher. Be sure to make copies of all original receipts and your travel voucher before mailing them to NCATE.
E-MAIL BOE REPORTS (See also Spring 1999, Fall 1998, Spring 1998)

Team chairs are encouraged to transmit BOE reports to NCATE as an e-mail attachment. This will save time and out-of-pocket expenses for chairs and expenses for the institution. If you do not have this capability, you may request a pre-printed Federal Express air bill for sending the final BOE report to NCATE. NCATE’s Federal Express account number is pre-printed on the form and charges will be direct-billed to NCATE. This will save your out-of-pocket expenses and speed billing of expenses to the institution. Please contact Pam Magasich or Marva Atwater at NCATE to request an NCATE Federal Express air bill.

ANNUAL REPORTS COMPLETED ON-LINE

Part C (response to standards) of the 1999 AACTE/NCATE Annual Report is being completed electronically by institutions. Using a password issued by NCATE, an institution accesses and completes the Annual Report document via NCATE’s website. No further action is required to transmit the report to NCATE. Once an institution accesses the report and begins work on the document, it can be saved as either “draft” or “final.” Both drafts and final versions are automatically transmitted to a database, where NCATE can access the final reports, or monitor progress being made in completing the reports.
PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (See also Spring 1999)

Teams should ask questions and look for data that indicate the degree to which candidates know their content area, are able to teach it and help students learn. Findings should be described in the BOE report. Questions regarding candidate performance that should be answered in the team report include:

- How does the unit know that candidates have the appropriate content knowledge and professional and pedagogical skills? What do interviews with cooperating teachers, school administrators, candidates and graduates indicate about the quality of preparation?

- What are admission requirements? How many candidates meet the requirements? What are exit criteria? How do admission/exit requirements ensure quality candidates at entrance and competency at exit?

- How is candidate performance assessed? What types of assessments are used, e.g., portfolios, videos, licensing exams? How do assessments reflect the unit’s conceptual framework? state and professional standards?

- How well do candidates perform on assessments? How well prepared are the candidates recommended for licensing? How does the unit make judgments about licensing recommendations?

- How well are candidates performing on state licensing exams? (BOE teams should report these data.)

- How are candidate assessments used to improve programs?

THEMATIC STRANDS OF THE STANDARDS

In addition to performance assessment, the current standards integrate a number of other themes and expectations throughout the standards. These same themes will appear in the NCATE 2000 standards. The conceptual framework, for example, should be evident in all aspects of the unit’s design and delivery of programs. The framework should provide the foundation for student teaching placement decisions, the design of evaluation, instruments used by the unit, candidate assessment and expectations, and interaction with the P–12 community, among other areas. Besides performance assessment, other themes that are woven throughout the standards are:

- Conceptual Framework. As indicated above, the conceptual framework should
drive all components of the unit’s programs, from design and instruction through assessment and evaluation.

- **Diversity.** The presence and awareness of diversity is also expected to influence all aspects of program design, curriculum, and field experience. Attention to diversity should be reflected in quality of instruction and faculty qualifications, as well as in faculty and candidate populations and recruitment plans.

- **Intellectual Vitality.** Although intellectual vitality is referred to explicitly as an indicator for only one standard (III.A), it informs a number of standards, including quality of instruction, professional development, and faculty assignments.

- **Technology.** The application of current technology is expected to be a component of the programs offered by the unit as well as a key element of the operation of the unit itself. Attention to and understanding of technology applications should be evidenced in program design and curricula, faculty knowledge and instructional practices. In addition, the team should expect the presence of and financial support for adequate technological resources in faculty offices, classrooms, media labs, and library facilities.

- **Professional Community.** Like the conceptual framework, evidence of the unit’s collaborative relationships with its partners in professional education (i.e. faculty that teach in the content and general studies areas, as well as the local schools) is expected to permeate all aspects of its operation. Although standard I.I addresses this issue directly, the unit’s success in this area is also an important function of program evaluation, program and field experience design, governance of the unit, monitoring and advisement, faculty assignments and professional development activities.

- **Evaluation.** Although ongoing evaluation of programs is addressed specifically as part of standard I.A, evaluation of faculty is also a component of the standard on quality of instruction (I.G) and professional development (III.C). Overall, ongoing and systematic evaluations of programs that are linked to the framework and applied to program modifications should be evident to the BOE team.

Teams may find it helpful to use these themes to determine whether units meet standards. Teams also have the responsibility for indicating when areas are not being adequately addressed. For example, field experiences and faculty instruction should reflect the conceptual framework. The professional and pedagogical studies should incorporate diversity and technology, and faculty should have knowledge and experiences in these areas. The unit and/or its programs should be assessing the competence of candidates through performance assessments. Evaluations should be ongoing and used to improve practice.
ADDRESSING PREVIOUS WEAKNESSES

All weaknesses cited on the Accreditation Action Report for the previous visit must be addressed as either “corrected” or “continued” in the BOE report for the continuing accreditation visit.

This includes weaknesses associated with stipulations. While the UAB may have removed the stipulation based on documentation submitted by the unit, this is only a paper review. The BOE team must verify that these weaknesses have in fact been addressed. (It is possible that a BOE team may find that a weakness associated with a stipulation has not, in practice, been adequately addressed.) Weaknesses associated with a stipulated standard(s) should be dealt with in the same manner as any other previous weaknesses. They must be cited in the BOE report for the continuing visit as either “corrected” or “continued.”

EXIT CONFERENCES

The exit interview at the end of the BOE visit should include the BOE team chair, state team co-chair, state consultant, and the unit head and NCATE coordinator. It may also include the provost and chancellor or president. In cases where BOE teams are small (three people), the entire team may attend. Exit conferences that report to the full faculty are discouraged, but may occur under special circumstances.

The following principles guide the exit conference:

- The purpose of the exit conference is to present the team’s findings as they will appear in the BOE report and to remind institutional personnel of the timelines and procedures for completing the process.

- There should be no surprises for institutions when the final team report is received. All weaknesses should be cited in the exit conference, even if there are a large number of them. (The chair may distribute a written draft of weakness statements, with the caveat in writing that weaknesses may be subsequently edited and revised.)

- The team’s findings are not debated during the exit conference. The unit will have the opportunity to submit a rejoinder responding to the weaknesses cited in the BOE report. Team chairs should encourage the unit to rejoin weaknesses for which it has evidence that the weakness does not exist.

- The team does not recommend an accreditation decision nor should it predict the outcome of the accreditation decision; accreditation decisions are the sole responsibility of the Unit Accreditation Board. Chairs should remind unit personnel of the separate roles of the BOE and UAB.

- Taping of the exit conference is not recommended.
Before the exit conference, team chairs should carefully review all rationales for the standards or categories of standards to be sure that there are no “concerns” not identified as weaknesses, that could potentially be identified as such by the UAB. Unit personnel should be aware that the UAB can cite weaknesses based on concerns discussed in the BOE report. Therefore, the report should explain mitigating factors regarding “concerns” not identified as weaknesses.

Team members should be cautious about answering questions from faculty or candidates at any time during the visit that attempt to solicit an opinion about “how the unit is doing.” Sometimes positive responses to such questions can be misconstrued by the unit as an assurance that it will be accredited or will have its accreditation continued. Units have been surprised when they were denied accreditation or were placed on probation because the team or the chair made statements during the course of the visit or exit conference such as “we see no big problems,” “everything looks okay,” “you have nothing to worry about.”

And, while weaknesses should not be made light of in the exit conference, team chairs should avoid making negative statements to the effect that the unit “is in serious trouble.” The exit conference should be as “factual” and as neutral as possible, avoiding reassurances, opinions, and warnings.

TRAVEL EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT POLICY
(See also Fall 1998 and Spring 1998)

The following policies shall apply to NCATE payment of approved travel expenses, whether for NCATE staff travel or for volunteers serving on governance boards, the Board of Examiners (“BOE”), committees, and grant-funded project and meetings subject to further policies stated by grantors. These policies shall apply whether NCATE pays the expenses directly, is direct-billed, or reimburses the staff member or volunteer (“traveler”).

NCATE will provide travelers with a travel reimbursement voucher form that bears the name of the meeting or event, the dates and location of the event, and the appropriate charge codes from the Chart of Accounts. All original receipts must be stapled to the back of the voucher. Travelers are asked to assist in making the reimbursement process more efficient by adding up and clearly marking the “Grand Total” that documents the expected amount of the reimbursement.

Reimbursements are normally made by NCATE within one week of receipt at the NCATE office.

Substitute Teacher Pay

School districts are expected to cover substitute teacher pay. However, when necessary, NCATE will reimburse the school or school district employers of NEA-appointed volunteers serving on governance boards, the Board of Examiners, and committees, and be itself reimbursed by funds provided by the National Education Association for this
purpose. Grant-funded projects and meetings may reimburse the school or school district employers of their volunteers, for the substitute teacher pay required by their absences, subject to further policies stated by grantors. NEA-appointed volunteers should obtain an Application for Substitute Teacher Pay form from NCATE.

Transportation

Full reimbursement will be provided for coach airline fare or cost of other public transportation. Passenger receipt of ticket must be included with request for reimbursement. NCATE requires that approved travel take advantage of reduced fares by booking 21 days in advance and staying over a Saturday night whenever possible. Travelers are encouraged to book transportation through the NCATE travel agency, Vacation Travel Center, 800 876-4455, and will be required to give the agent the authorization/charge code assigned by the NCATE staff member responsible for the meeting or event. Vacation Travel Center will direct-bill the charges to an NCATE account, and issue a monthly report to NCATE showing charges by authorization/charge code.

NCATE recognizes that circumstances and personal emergencies sometimes require the change of travel plans. However, the change of nonrefundable or advance-purchase airline tickets can significantly increase the expense of the fare. Therefore, NCATE is willing to pay up to one service fee for ticket changes per trip, up to a maximum of $75.00. Changes that result in fare increases, more than $75.00 over the originally booked fare, will be the responsibility of the traveler or institution/organization requesting the change, unless approved in advance by the Director of Finance and Administration or the Vice-President of the applicable NCATE department. Such unauthorized changes will not be reimbursed, and must be guaranteed with the traveler’s personal credit card in order to be booked by Vacation Travel Center. Vacation Travel may also assess the traveler a $10.00 service fee in addition to the $75.00 airline fee. NCATE expects that the costs of travel changes will be paid by the organization that requests the traveler’s presence.

In the event that air transportation is unavailable or impractical, reimbursement will be made for train fare, or automobile travel at the rate of $.30 per mile, plus tolls, parking, lodging and meals. If air or other public transportation is available and practical, but an individual elects to travel by private automobile, reimbursement will be provided to a maximum of coach class airfare between the point of origin and destination.

Costs of travel by taxi or other local transportation will be reimbursed if accompanied by appropriate documentation (receipt or note if the receipt should be lost). Unusual or excessive charges must be explained.
**Housing and Meals**

NCATE will have hotels direct billed when possible. Hotel bills must be signed to indicate the traveler’s approval of charges. If the traveler pays for lodging and meals, a paid hotel bill must be included with request for reimbursement.

Meals will be reimbursed at actual cost (attach original receipts), not to exceed the amount of $36.00 a day. At sponsored conferences and events, NCATE provides many meals as noted on the voucher.

Bar bills, newspapers, telephone calls unrelated to NCATE business other than reasonable ‘safe arrival’ calls, movie charges, dry cleaning/laundry, gift shop charges, and other personal expenses are the traveler’s sole responsibility and must be paid at time of check-out.

**Accreditation Visits by BOE Members**

The voucher for the on-site accreditation visit is sent to BOE members prior to the visit in a package that includes the *Pre-Visit Planning Instrument and Rating Scale*, list of team members, and evaluation forms. All NCATE travel expense reimbursement policies apply to accreditation visits; in addition, if the institution has not arranged for direct billing of the hotel bill, team members are reimbursed for the hotel as well.

Team chairs may charge NCATE for the cost of typing, copying, and mailing the report. **If these expenses are not included with the travel voucher, the voucher should include a note that additional charges for these expenses will be submitted later. Such note should give a date of planned completion, so that NCATE does not reconcile the financial report for the institution before all expenses are received.**

NCATE does not reimburse team *state consultants* or NEA/AFT representatives. Consultants will be reimbursed by either the state agency responsible for program approval, or the NEA/AFT affiliate. **BOE members are encouraged to assist in keeping the reimbursement processes separate by refraining from combining meal and other charges.**

In addition, the one exception to the visit reimbursement process is that for visits to institutions in the state of Indiana, vouchers are submitted directly to the state, rather than to NCATE, and travel is booked through channels established by the state of Indiana, rather than Vacation Travel Center.

NCATE appreciates the service of members of the BOE and is committed to reimbursing their expenses as quickly as possible to reduce the financial and logistical inconvenience to these vitally needed volunteers. In addition, NCATE cannot bill the visited institution for its visit expenses until all expenses are paid and reconciled against the advance paid, if any, by the institution. This reconciliation must be done on a prompt basis to assist both
institutions and NCATE in maintaining cost control, appropriate cash flow, and the closing of fiscal year books in time for externally-determined audit cycles.

Therefore, BOE Members are asked to assist in completing this cycle by:

- Submitting their vouchers and receipts on a timely basis, preferably within 10 days of the end of the visit. Vouchers will be considered late, and will not be reimbursed, by February 1 for fall accreditation visits, and June 15 for spring accreditation visits. One e-mail reminder will be issued by NCATE.

- Notifying the Finance Department if a voucher was sent but reimbursement not received within two weeks, so that it can be assumed lost in the mail and replicated for payment.

- Notifying the Finance Department immediately after the visit if there are no expenses to reimburse. This may be done via e-mail (nancy@ncate.org). This is especially helpful if the institution arranged or paid for the airfare directly, as NCATE has no way of knowing this unless the BOE Member informs us.

- Including the original air ticket and/or printed itinerary with the voucher, even if it was booked through Vacation Travel. In some instances, institutions are required by their audit and travel policies to acquire a copy of the actual ticket before issuing reimbursement to NCATE.

Questions regarding these policies should be directed to Nancy Blasdel, NCATE’s Director of Finance (nancy@ncate.org).

REMINDERS…

Chairs are reminded that they should not wait indefinitely for responses to drafts sent to unit heads or team members. Generally, unit heads and teams members should be given a week (unless there are extenuating circumstances) to respond to the draft BOE report. If no response is received, the chair may contact the unit head or team members to indicate that the report is being finalized. Team members should respond promptly to drafts, and should let the team chair know if they have no comments to the draft.

Chairs should contact the AFT or NEA representative assigned to their on-site visit with the logistics for the visit (transportation, hotel, team meeting times, etc.). These individuals are listed on the team list sent to BOE team members by NCATE. If you have any questions regarding these representatives, please contact Marva Atwater at NCATE (marva@ncate.org).

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PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

Under the “NCATE 2000” revision of standards for unit accreditation, performance assessment of candidates will take on greater importance in accreditation decisions. The current NCATE standards include expectations for the performance of candidates. Teams should be asking the unit administrators and program faculty how they know that candidates know their content area, are able to teach it, and can facilitate student learning. What convincing data does the team see?

At the first team meeting, team members should discuss performance assessment and expectations in the NCATE standards. Questions that may guide the discussion include the following:

- Which individuals in the professional community should be interviewed about performance assessment?
- What questions would help the team determine whether performance assessment is being conducted in an effective manner?
- What evidence may be available in the exhibit room or on campus to help convince the team that performance assessment is being conducted effectively?
- How well are candidates performing on content tests (e.g., Praxis II) and teaching knowledge tests? What do these data suggest to the team about candidate knowledge and competence?

All BOE teams should be looking for evidence of performance assessment as it relates to the NCATE standards. However, in states and/or at institutions in which performance assessment is an integral part of state policy or program design (Kentucky, for example, requires that all of its professional education units have assessment plans, require portfolios of candidates, and develop on-demand assessment tasks), the team should reconsider its approach to the on-site review. Rather than beginning with an examination of traditional evidence on assessment (e.g., transcripts, and test results) in the exhibit room, the team might start with a review of candidate portfolios, performance assessment instruments, and files on individual students. The team could then move to the traditional sources of evidence as needed to complete the whole picture.

BOE REPORTS

Weakness statements (for both initial and continuing BOE reports) should be one sentence, concise statements of the problem.

Teams should keep in mind that in initial and continuing reviews, the unit has the opportunity to rejoin any weaknesses cited. However, often a unit will not rejoin a
concern related to standards that is discussed in the observations narrative, but not
specifically cited as a weakness. The UAB, on the other hand, can legitimately use the
information presented in the narrative as evidence to cite a new weakness, particularly if
the narrative discussion does not provide the necessary context or clarification, and other
units are being cited for similar weaknesses.

When in doubt, the team should err on the side of citing weaknesses, thus prompting the
unit to rejoin. The team must provide a rationale for not citing as weaknesses problems
associated with standards. The reasons for not citing a weakness must be substantive
(e.g., the unit is aware of the concern and has documented plans in place to correct it, or it
is sufficiently limited that it does not presently affect quality), rather than excuse-making
(the region is not diverse, therefore the unit cannot recruit diverse candidates and faculty,
or it’s a small institution with scarce resources, it cannot afford technology.)

**Draft BOE Reports** (See also Spring 1998)

Draft BOE reports sent to NCATE for review should be accompanied by a note from the
chair indicating the timeline for receiving comments. This will help staff prioritize
reading the drafts. Draft reports are generally responded to within 48 hours. **If you send a
draft to NCATE and do not receive a response, please contact us to be sure your report was received!** Keep in mind if you mail the draft, it may take up to a week to
reach NCATE. Draft reports may be sent via fax or as e-mail attachments (it is not
necessary to include sources of evidence, appendices, etc.). **All reports should be sent to
the attention of Pam Magasich** ([pam@ncate.org](mailto:pam@ncate.org); fax: 202 296-6620).

Team chairs, after receiving comments from team members and NCATE, should send the
draft to the unit head for correction of factual errors. Unless there are extenuating
circumstances, the team chair should not wait more than a week for a response from the
unit. If no response is received from the unit within a week, the chair should contact the
unit head and indicate that the report is being finalized.

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**Final BOE Reports**

Final BOE reports are due at NCATE 30 days after the on-site visit. Final reports should
not be sent to NCATE via regular postal service. **Please use Federal Express, Express
Mail, UPS, or other special delivery service.** A finished BOE report may also be
transmitted to NCATE as an e-mail attachment. **Reports should be sent to the attention of
Pam Magasich.**

Chairs are also reminded that they should send a copy of the final BOE report to
each BOE team member, and if the visit was joint with the state agency, a copy to
each state team member.
SUBMITTING BOE REPORT EXPENSES (See also Spring 1999 and Spring 1998)

Team chairs are asked to indicate on their expense vouchers whether they will be submitting additional expenses for BOE report preparation. Expenses related to the preparation of the BOE report (copying, typing, mailing) can be submitted to NCATE for reimbursement. These expenses are charged to the institution as part of the expense for the conduct of the visit. NCATE does not bill the institution for the visit until all team expenses are logged in. Often, requests for reimbursement for report preparation are received after NCATE has billed the institution for the visit, necessitating an additional billing to the institution. By indicating on the expense voucher that additional expenses will be submitted, NCATE will know to wait to bill the institution.

MAKING THE DIFFICULT DECISIONS—MOVING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION UNITS TOWARD CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

It can often be difficult to make decisions about citing weaknesses for a unit —team members sympathize with the unit —they face similar problems and constraints at their own institutions; faculty and staff have been very hospitable, they are nice people. Nevertheless, it is incumbent upon every team to rigorously apply the NCATE standards equally to all institutions and to make the difficult decisions and cite weaknesses when units do not fully meet standards. When teams hesitate to cite problems as weaknesses, or to disclose any concerns that were found in an effort “to go easy” for whatever reason, they do a disservice to the unit and NCATE in the long run.

1) Weaknesses cited serve as indications to the unit of the areas in which improvements need to be made to ensure that the highest quality programs are offered and that candidates are as well prepared as possible. Weaknesses cited can and should be the impetus for positive change, and can serve as leverage for the unit in gaining the necessary resources to bring programs up to speed.

New emphases in the standards such as technology and performance assessment may not be addressed at the level expected for national accreditation. Not citing them as weaknesses may not provide the leverage necessary to make needed changes before the next visit. Because expectations for these areas are likely to be even greater by 2000/2001, weaknesses can alert units of critical areas to be improved between on-site visits.
2) The unit will undergo another visit in five years. At that review, a team which holds the unit to the standards will likely find and cite the problems that the previous team hesitated to point out. Problems may have become more severe over time. There may also be new weaknesses. If weaknesses are numerous or severe, the unit could be facing probation - a situation that may have been avoided had weaknesses been pointed out at the previous visit. The unit will now have only two years to address these problems before it undergoes a full review.

Teams should keep in mind that the unit has the opportunity to rejoin any weaknesses cited. The UAB will remove weaknesses successfully rejoined. On the other hand, the UAB may also cite weaknesses indicated in the report but not cited by the team. BOE teams are encouraged, when in doubt, to err on the side of citing the weakness. It is more fair to the unit to provide the opportunity to rejoin a weakness and have it removed by the UAB than to have a previously uncited weakness added by the UAB.

On Wednesday morning before the visit ends, teams should carefully review their writing. Where concerns are identified in the report, have they been cited as weaknesses? If not, why not? The team will have to provide a rationale for not citing as weaknesses problems associated with standards. The reasons for not citing these must be substantive (i.e. the unit is aware of the concern and has documented plans in place to correct it, etc.), rather than “sympathetic” (“the faculty are dedicated and really trying”) or excuse-making (“It's not a diverse region, we can’t expect them to have minority candidates or faculty,” “It's a small institution, resources are scarce, they can’t afford new computers.”)

Teams should also carefully review their writing for “cliff hanger” sentences - that is, sentences which indicate a concern exists, but are not followed up with any further explanation of the nature or degree of the problem and its impact on programs or candidates, etc. For example, a statement such as: “Some students expressed concerns about the quality of advising at the advanced level” that is not followed up with any further information, makes it difficult to determine the exact nature and seriousness of the problem —How many students had problems with advising, just a few, a substantial minority? What were the nature of the concerns - the availability of advisors? Quality of the advisement received? What were the results for the students that received inadequate advisement?

NCATE staff review draft BOE reports to ensure consistency - that all standards are addressed, all concerns are adequately explained, appropriate weaknesses are cited, and that important “thematic” issues such as diversity, use of technology and performance assessment are discussed. Feedback provided to the team chair will indicate inconsistencies or areas that may not be adequately addressed. There may be cases when the team chair will need to contact team members for clarification of concerns and weaknesses. Therefore, team members should keep detailed notes about their findings and team discussions. In the event that the team chair is unable to contact team members, the chair will need to exercise his or her best judgment in deciding whether weaknesses should be cited.
REPORTING ON OFF-CAMPUS AND DISTANCE LEARNING PROGRAMS

All professional education units are required to report to NCATE any off-campus programs they may be offering, either on their “Intent to Seek Initial Accreditation” or “Intent to Seek Continuing Accreditation” forms submitted to NCATE. A copy of the Intent form is sent to the chair prior to the visit. All off-campus programs for the preparation of professional educators must be included in the NCATE review, and NCATE must include off-campus sites in its annual guide to professional education units.

At the previsit, the team chair should find out the following about off-campus sites (including overseas programs) as well as distance learning programs:

- How many off-campus sites are administered by the unit, and what is the enrollment and characteristics of each one? (e.g., military base, teachers pursuing advanced degrees?)
- Do sites offer courses leading to a degree, or are full programs delivered at the site? How many students are involved?
- How does the unit maintain/exercise oversight over off-campus and distance learning programs?
- How far from the main campus are off-campus sites?
- What delivery systems are employed in distance learning and how many students participate?

The chair should make arrangements for the site(s) to be visited by a team member, or for faculty or administrators to be available on the main campus during the visit, or, if there are great distances involved, for faculty, administrators, and candidates to be interviewed by teleconference, or interactive technology, etc. If there are a number of off-campus programs, the chair may decide that only selected sites will be visited, based on enrollments and extent of offerings. The chair should consult with NCATE in determining whether overseas programs should be visited, or if an additional team member is needed to complete a review of all sites.

The existence of, and quality of, off-campus and distance learning programs must be reported in the BOE report. The introduction to a continuing accreditation BOE report should list the off-campus (or distance learning) programs offered and indicate which sites were reviewed and how they were reviewed, i.e. visited by a team member, or through interviews conducted with personnel via teleconference, etc. In an initial accreditation BOE report, a brief introduction should be included that indicates that the unit has off-campus (or distance learning) programs, and how the review of those programs was conducted. Observations for standards or categories should include references to off-campus programs and distance learning programs. This is particularly important where significant differences exist between the main campus and off-campus sites. Page 106 of the *Handbook for BOE Teams* lists a number of questions that should
be used as a guide to reviewing off-campus programs. Similar questions have been
developed to help teams review distance learning programs. (see next page)

With regard to distance learning programs, it is important for the BOE team to interview
administrators, faculty and candidates, as well as to review documentation such as the
conceptual framework, program design, and syllabi. The technology that is being used to
conduct the program should be examined. Standards pertaining to field experiences and
candidate supervision and evaluation may require particular attention.

As a general rule, any off-campus or distance learning programs leading to a degree or
licensure must be evaluated during the on-site review. Courses offered through distance
learning or off-campus should not require similar scrutiny, unless a significant number of
candidates and the overall quality of offerings may be affected by the delivery system.

**The unit must ensure that ALL programs, including those located off-campus and
those offered via distance learning, are of the quality expected for national
accreditation.**
**Questions Developed for Assistance in Evaluation of Distance Learning Programs:**

The following nine questions were approved by the UAB as guides for BOE teams and institutions in the assessment of distance learnings programs. These questions were developed to assist teams and units in determining whether distance learning offerings meet NCATE standards to the same degree as other programs offered by the unit through traditional means.

1. Are the design and delivery of distance learning programs consistent with the mission of the institution and the unit, supported by a conceptual framework and knowledge base, guided by a long-range plan, and supported by adequate resources?

2. Are evaluations of the distance learning program systematic and ongoing, and used to improve the program? Are evaluation instruments tailored to the unique characteristics and needs of the candidates?

3. Are faculty who teach via distance delivery qualified for their assignments and competent in the methods of delivery?

4. Is the balance of part-time and full-time faculty, requirements for scholarship and service, and evaluation the same for faculty who teach via distance learning as it is for other faculty?

5. Do distance learning programs that are delivered via technology have sufficient and reliable technical support in place for both faculty and candidates, so that technological breakdowns do not interfere with delivery?

6. Are distance learning programs, including programs that are acquired through contract with an outside vendor or delivered in a consortium arrangement, controlled, coordinated and evaluated by the unit?

7. Do distance learning programs in professional education ensure that field experiences and student teaching are well-sequenced, supervised by trained personnel and monitored by unit faculty, and integrated into the program?

8. Are distance learning candidates provided the same level of advisement and personal access to faculty, monitoring of progress, and assessment as is provided for traditional candidates? In particular, do assessment measures assure that candidates acquire the competencies that are set out in the model, and attainment goals for individual courses?

9. Do distance learning programs provide candidates with the same information and materials (e.g., syllabi and bibliographies, course materials, study aids, as well as institutional assistance such as financial aid information) that are provided to on-campus candidates? Are distance learning candidates assured adequate access to library and technological resources to support their research and learning needs on par with traditional students?
THIRD PARTY TESTIMONY

At present, NCATE receives letters of third-party comment for less than half of institutions preparing for BOE review. NCATE staff forward copies of those letters to the unit head and the BOE chair approximately two to three months before the team visit. Both the institution and the BOE chair should assume that if they haven’t received any letters from NCATE by the time of the previsit, it means none have been received by the NCATE office.

Some BOE chairs have indicated that not all institutions may be publishing invitations for third-party comment, which is a required component of the review. Accordingly, staff will notify all institutions, beginning with fall 1998 visits, that they must display a copy of the published solicitation notice(s) in the exhibit room. (In the past, NCATE has suggested, but not required, that institutions verify their compliance with this process.)

BOE chairs are also reminded to document in the “Sources of Evidence” section of the BOE report all letters received that are relevant to the NCATE standards, whether the letter prompted follow-up by the team or not. Letters received through this process and the unit’s response to them become part of the data the team must examine. One of the reasons the third-party testimony process exists is to ensure all parties have the opportunity to comment on the quality of the education unit. Therefore, it is important that all letters relevant to the standards receive consideration and follow-up, if necessary, by the BOE team.

NOTE TO TEAM CHAIRS REGARDING BOE REPORTS:

BOE reports, both draft and final, should be sent to the attention of Pam Magasich at the NCATE office. All reports should be accompanied by a note indicating whether the report is draft or final (note may be informal, handwritten). Draft reports may be faxed to NCATE (it is not necessary to fax sources of evidence, etc.). When submitting a draft, please indicate your timeline for receiving feedback; we make every effort to respond to drafts within the timeline specified.

Final BOE reports should be sent to NCATE via UPS, Federal Express , or some other “secure” form of delivery. Please do not use regular mail service to send final BOE reports; they are sometimes lost in this manner.

Final BOE reports are due at the NCATE office 30 days after the visit. While there is some flexibility in this time line, i.e. a week or two, NCATE should not be waiting for BOE reports months past the visit. At times there may be circumstances, such as personal or family illness, that may prevent a chair from finishing a report on time. In these instances, the chair should notify NCATE, so that we may advise the institution of the situation.
EXPENSE VOUCHERS:

NCATE Controller Nancy Blasdel offers the following Do’s and Don’ts for submitting NCATE Expense Reimbursement Vouchers:

Do   Put your full name and address on the voucher.

Do   Multiply your mileage by 30 cents per mile. If you forget the allowable rate, look at the instructions on the back of the voucher form.

Do   Add up the “Grand Total” at the bottom right corner of the grid.

Do   Include your airfare ticket receipt, even if NCATE paid for it directly through our travel agency. This is very helpful to us in billing the institution, as an added check against the airfare billing and travel agency reports. However, the usual practice still applies to filling out the form; only record those expenses you personally paid, for which you request reimbursement.

Do   Get individual receipts at meals. The group dinner check you paid may have included state-sponsored members of the team for whose expenses NCATE is not responsible.

Do   Let NCATE know if you had no cash expenses to reimburse, or if the institution sent you the airplane ticket or otherwise directly took care of you. Logging your $0.00 expense will keep us from having to track you down.

Don’t   Wait months to send in your voucher. Not only is the cash out of your pocket, but NCATE cannot bill the institution for the visit expenses until all team members’ expenses are logged.

Don’t   Wait months for your reimbursement check to come back to you. If you have sent a voucher and not received a check within a month, something is lost in the mail; please call or e-mail Nancy and together we can figure out how to proceed. Nancy’s new performance standard is a two-week maximum payment cycle.

Don’t   Staple the receipts to the front of the voucher form, especially in overlapping patterns that obscure the voucher itself. Receipts are necessary; please staple them to the back of the form over the instructions.

Questions regarding expense reimbursements should be directed to Nancy Blasdel: voice mail: 202 416-6154; e-mail: nancy@ncate.org