

## **Frequently Asked Questions about NCATE’s Web-based Program Review System as It Applies to NCTE**

**Adapted and Expanded for NCTE  
(January 2011)**

### **1. We offer initial licensure programs at both the baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate (alternate route) levels. Do we need to prepare separate program reports for each track?**

If the assessments you plan to submit are the same for both programs, then you can submit a “linked report” for both programs. (Data tables should be disaggregated for candidates in each program.) See NCATE for directions concerning linked reports. However, if there are differences among program tracks in their assessment structure, assessment content, and/or conceptual model, then two reports (e.g., one report for the baccalaureate program and one for the post-baccalaureate) are required. Care should be taken in either of these situations to explain clearly, in the case of post-baccalaureate or master’s degree programs leading to initial licensure, exactly how the program assesses prior knowledge—especially content preparation—to determine alignment with NCTE standards; simply accepting the fact that a candidate has a degree in English as proof of meeting standards is insufficient evidence. Traditional English undergraduate non-teaching degrees typically are not well aligned with NCTE Standards for the Preparation of English Language Arts Teachers (2003); neither is a traditional non-teaching master’s degree in English, education, or an alternative licensure-only program. Also, NCATE offers a recognition program specifically for post-baccalaureate or MAT programs that are more generic in scope but that provide initial licensure. All questions about that program should be directed to Dr. Margie Crutchfield at NCATE ([Margie@ncate.org](mailto:Margie@ncate.org))

### **2. For many of our programs, we have had fewer than ten completers over the past three-year period. Are we required to submit program reports for those programs?**

Yes; at present, a program report is required if the program has had any completers in the program at all over the past three years and/or currently has candidates in the pipeline, even if there have been no recent completers. However, the 80 percent state licensure test pass rate requirement does not apply to programs that do not have 10 completers over a three-year period. During 2009-2011, NCATE is studying programs with fewer than 5 completers over a three-year period to see if there are any alternatives to regular program submissions that may be appropriate. During this time, programs that have fewer than 5 completers may wish to suspend their review process. For more information, contact NCATE directly ([Margie@ncate.org](mailto:Margie@ncate.org)).

### **3. When are program reports due to NCATE?**

Institutions are required to submit their initial program reports on March 15 or September 15, **at least one year before their on-site visits**. If at all possible, a full 18 months prior to the site visit is highly recommended. This additional time provides a program that might be found

Recognized with Probation, Further Development Required, or Recognized with Conditions time to address the conditions of the report before the unit is visited. **Note:** It would be wise to clear all due dates with the NCATE office.

#### **4. What is the process for submitting reports?**

Since Fall 2004, program reports have been completed via an online form that is accessible by institution ID and password. Approximately two months prior to the submission deadline, NCATE will send an e-mail to all NCATE Deans and NCATE Coordinators reminding them of the deadline and requesting that the unit submit a chart of all programs expected to be submitted in the upcoming semester. Once NCATE has received that information, NCATE staff will prepare the submission site for each program and then provide the Dean and Coordinator with complete instructions, the URL, login, and password.

After the NCATE Coordinator at the institution receives the appropriate URL address and access information, he or she can provide that information to individual compilers. Once a compiler has received the user ID and password, he or she can access the report format by pointing his or her Internet browser to the designated UR where a login screen will appear. When a compiler has successfully logged in, he or she will see a list of all the programs to be submitted by the unit.

Specific instructions for creating and inputting the different sections of the report are available on this web page in a document titled “Submitting Program Reports in [submission date].”

Because the program report will be submitted completely online, documents must be prepared either to be uploaded or submitted as attachments in a standardized word processing format (e.g., Word). Attaching documents in a format other than Word is permitted but not recommended. The compiler will be able to save the attached files as a draft and return to the Web-based form later to complete the input or uploads. . When the report has been completed, the compiler (unless the institution has designated another person) will mark it as finished and submit it for review. A copy of what has been submitted should be retained by the institution for future reference. Specific directions for submission are available as archived video presentations on the NCATE Website.

#### **5. What are the options for submitting a program report?**

NCATE now has multiple options that a program can choose from as the report is prepared. The regular option, Option A, is the most common and has been in effect since the process began. It consists of a minimum of six assessments, including, if appropriate, the state mandated content examination, as well as an additional content assessment, an assessment that focuses on candidate effect on student learning, assessments that measure content pedagogy and professional knowledge and skills (usually 2), and an additional assessment focused on other areas of the program such as dispositions or further measurement of content, content pedagogy, or professional knowledge and skills.

Option B is a new option that is in the final pilot stage. In this option, the program has only two requirements in terms of assessments, the state mandated content examination, if required; and an assessment focused on candidate effect on student knowledge. Other than the examination, the program may submit up to seven assessments or as few as one additional assessment.

Programs need to meet the same set of standards as in Option A; they may choose to do that with fewer than six assessments, but no more than eight. An in depth narrative concerning the program is required in addition to the information usually contained in Sections I-V. A special program report form is required.

The program can select the key assessments (required of all candidates) with the following constraints:

1. The program can select up to 8 assessments; there is no lower limit on the number of assessments.
2. One assessment must be the state licensure test for content, if one is required.
3. One assessment must focus on candidate impact on student learning.
4. Assessments, taken as a whole, must demonstrate mastery of NCTE Program Standards.
5. Assessments must address the following key elements of NCATE Unit Standard 1: content, pedagogical content knowledge and skills, and impact on student learning.

Option C is available only to those programs which have previously been recognized under the most recent SPA standards (For NCTE, these are the standards approved in 2003). The program submits a report focused on continuing data collection and analysis for its assessments and provides a substantive Section V concerning how the data have been used to improve candidate performance and strengthen the program. A special program report form is needed for this option along with approval by NCATE, based on continuing unit accreditation.

The criteria consist of the following:

1. Programs must submit data on all assessments that shows that they continue to collect and evaluate evidence of candidate proficiency.
2. Programs submit documentation only for those assessments that are new or that have been substantively changed since the previous submission.
3. Programs respond only to those items in Section I (Context) for which there have been substantial changes since the previous submission.
4. There is a greater focus on Section V where programs explain in detail how they have used data to improve candidate performance and strengthen their programs.

Option D requires prior approval from NCATE and is appropriate for those programs that have a rich research base. This option, not yet implemented, permits an institution to conduct validity and reliability studies of its assessments in lieu of other program report evidence requirements. The validity and reliability of assessments (content in relation to standards, consistency with other evidence, success in subsequent employment, etc.) is so integral to a standards and performance-based national recognition review that systematic examination of validity is essential. It would, by definition, directly address NCTE Program Standards. It would permit institutions with appropriately prepared faculty to formulate a task as part of accreditation that is meaningful for them, while, not unimportantly, helping to advance the research base for educator preparation. It is an option that might lend itself to joint participation across several institutions, or at least across programs within an institution. Before a program could choose this option, it must review approval from NCATE.

## **6. Who will review and make a decision on my program report?**

Each program report will be assigned to a team of two to three reviewers who have been trained in the standards by NCTE, and who have been screened for conflict of interest with the reporting institution. A team leader who also completes an individual report will compile a final or team

report, including a recognition decision representing the consensus of all the reviewers. The report also is reviewed by an *audit committee* comprised of highly experienced reviewers, who will make the final decision should the review team not reach consensus or if there is some question as to the validity of the team decision.

### **7. Upon what criteria will the recognition decision on our program be based?**

Program reports will be evaluated on how well assessments and data derived from assessments provide evidence that candidates meet the knowledge and skills standards specified by program standards. National recognition decisions, therefore, will be based on the success of program candidates as measured on credible assessments directly aligned to NCTE standards.

### **8. For programs with very small enrollments, how can NCTE make judgments based on data?**

For very small programs, data derived from assessments are not, by themselves, a reliable indicator of program quality. However, if candidates perform poorly on assessments, it will be important for the report preparer to reflect on why that poor performance occurred and how or whether the program should be changed as a consequence. No matter if the program is large or small, candidates are still expected to meet program standards.

### **9. What if our latest Title II data does not reflect an 80 percent pass rate for the program? What are our options?**

NCATE policy requires a program to have an 80 percent pass rate on the state licensure exam in the content area in order to qualify for program recognition. The data must be derived from the most recent annual reporting period, as reflected by a state or testing agency report, or the institution's own records (whichever provides the opportunity to present a more current set of data). This requirement is waived for programs that (1) do not have a required state licensure test, (2) have not been in existence long enough to have produced an annual cohort of completers, and/or (3) have not produced a total of ten completers in the last three years.

A program report that does not reflect an 80 percent pass rate under Assessment #1 on licensure tests cannot receive or retain full national recognition; however, the program could be nationally recognized with conditions and required to submit new test data within 18 months.

### **10. What about the handling of special cases?**

The following apply to programs that may have difficulty providing appropriate data for the program review:

Dormant Programs: If no candidates are in the pipeline and no one has graduated from the program in the past three years, a program report is not required. When the dormant program is reactivated by admitting candidates, a program report may be voluntarily submitted at that time.

Reactivated Programs: If a dormant program is reactivated by admitting candidates, the program may voluntarily submit a program report at that point. However, the unit must

submit a program report for a reactivated program as part of its scheduled program review cycle whether or not candidates have graduated from the program.

New Programs: A unit can voluntarily submit a program report for a new program anytime between on-site visits if the program has been approved by the state. It must submit a program report for the new program as part of its scheduled program review cycle whether or not candidates have graduated from the program.

Redesigned Programs: If a program is undergoing a major program redesign, it may request a delay of its submission of the program report. The delay request must be submitted to NCATE with a detailed explanation of the redesign and its timeline. A delay will be granted if the redesign requires major changes in the program and if the appropriate state agency agrees to the delay.

Small Programs: A program report must be completed if the program has had any completers at all over the past three years. However, the 80 percent pass rate requirement does not apply to programs that do not have 10 completers over a three-year period. Presently, small programs may request a suspension if they have had less than 5 completers during the past three years. This corresponds to NCATE's initiative regarding small programs (See response to FAQ #2)

Should you have any questions about the status of your program and into what category, if any, it might fall, contact NCATE for further information and a decision or recommendation.

### **11. How much assessment data are required in our program report?**

Three years of data for each set of assessments is optimal. However, for newly implemented assessments, you may only have one semester's worth of data, if that. As a rule of thumb, it is better to submit a newly developed assessment that meets the expectations of the program report than it is to submit a less compelling assessment for which you have several years of data. (Note: Assessments still in the "planning stage" do not carry much, if any, weight.)

The following chart delineates the data expected for initial reports:

| <b>Program Reports Submitted</b> | <b>Amount of Data Required</b>   |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| March 15, 2011                   | 2 applications of the assessment |
| September 15, 2011               | 2 applications of the assessment |

### **12. What can we include as attachments to the report?**

Only the items specified in Section I and IV of the report form may be attached to the report. Institutions will not be able to attach or submit any extraneous documentation with the report (e.g., handbooks, syllabi). Student work samples or artifacts will no longer be accepted as part of the program review document. Documentation external to the institution (e.g., a report from the testing agency) will need to be scanned by the institution in order to be submitted as an attachment. *Web links to sample student portfolios, other contextual documents, etc., will not be accessed by reviewers nor considered as evidence in arriving at a review decision.*

### **13. What happens if our narrative responses or our attachments exceed the stated limits?**

It is preferred that each attachment for a specific assessment (description, scoring guide, data chart) be limited to the equivalent of five text pages; however, in some cases assessment instruments or scoring guides may go slightly beyond five pages; **the actual size of an attachment may not exceed 2MB**. Each program is presently limited to 20 attachments although 10 or fewer are recommended. Programs should “bundle” all information on each assessment into a single attachment for ease of reviewing. Character limits for the narrative sections of the report are specified on the program report form. Adherence to these restrictions is expected.

Whoever writes the report should be focused upon making the report a clear, articulate document. This report is the only communication you have with reviewers; a poorly organized and written document clearly does not represent the program well, nor does it make it easy for reviewers to find the information they need. If they can not find what you claim to be in the report, or the explanations, tables, and other related information are unclear, they may have no choice but to indicate that evidence could not be found to show that the program is meeting standards.

### **14. When you refer to the “six to eight required assessments,” how are you defining an assessment?**

An assessment is an evaluated activity or requirement by which a program determines that specific outcomes or standards have been mastered by a candidate. However, for the purposes of the program report, one or more of the six to eight assessment “slots” may actually be addressed with limited “bundling” of assessments and data. The submission of any assessment will require the narrative description, alignment with standards information, and data results/analysis as well as the following three pieces:

- (1) the assessment instrument or assignment (unless a standardized examination),
- (2) the rubrics or scoring criteria for the assessment, and
- (3) data derived from the assessment.

### **15. Our institution has created assessments for performance-based reviews over the past five years. But there are more than the six to eight you now limit us to—more like 20 to 25. How should we report results from these? Do we need to leave out important aspects of evidence?**

Evidence that has been gathered about candidate knowledge and performance can be clustered into “composite” or “bundled” assessments and fitted into the six defined assessment areas, or the remaining two assessments. However, such “composite” or “bundled” assessments should be linked in some way to the same standards to provide that “composite” view. The program will also have to figure out how to report its data in meaningful ways for such combined assessments. There is no reason to omit important pieces of evidence, but NCTE and NCATE expect that assessments that have been constructed in response to a performance-based system can be adapted to the new program report and will be carefully aligned with specific NCTE standards.

**16. Can we use the same assessment for more than one of the six assessments or the additional two “free” assessments?**

Yes. For example, a comprehensive evaluation of a candidate portfolio or the student teaching semester may include in-depth assessments of both content knowledge and lesson planning. In this case, it would be appropriate to use the different components of the same evaluation instrument for the assessment on content knowledge, and the assessment on ability to plan instruction. The program, however, will need to identify carefully which elements of an assessment align with which standards and extract the elements and corresponding candidate performance data, for example, that pertain primarily to content standards and use it as evidence of candidates’ meeting selected content standards. Other elements from the assessment might then be extracted for other standards and candidate data reported accordingly. Citing an entire assessment, though, when clearly not all aspects of the assessment align with a standard(s) is not appropriate. At the same time, it is unwise to use one or two assessments repeatedly to address the number of standards NCTE has; it would be highly unusual if one or two assessments could adequately represent both the breadth and depth of all or even most standards. See prior note about the use of Option B for program submission.

**17. What is the difference between the report of findings on each assessment required in Section IV of the report, and the use of assessments we are asked to describe in Section V of the report?**

For each assessment in Section IV, you must briefly summarize the results of the data from the assessment, as well as interpret the data findings about candidate knowledge and skills in relation to the standards addressed by the assessment. This provides reviewers with specific information about how you believe each assessment addresses the specific NCTE standards.

Section V requires a program’s interpretation of what the overall results described in Section IV indicate about program quality and implications for strengthening the program and candidate performance.

**18. Our department of teacher education uses the same student teacher evaluation form for all secondary areas. Since the form is not aligned to the NCTE standards, will the data be of any use?**

For some of the required assessments in the program report, the data produced by these assessments have limited relevance to some of the standards. For example, some state licensure tests are more closely aligned to the professional standards than others. For another, generic student teaching evaluations will not, as a general rule, provide direct evidence of meeting NCTE program standards specific to English language arts. However, it is quite possible (and advisable) either to modify or code unit-wide assessments so that they may address NCTE standards, especially those that are not specifically targeted to English language arts teaching. Faculty have several options to ensure that these kinds of unit-wide assessments are appropriate for NCTE review. For example, program faculty could develop an addendum to a generic student teaching/internship evaluation that evaluates the candidate on appropriate NCTE standards. Faculty could also code elements in the unit-wide assessment with the specific NCTE standards that are addressed by the item and, in the discussion in Section IV for this assessment, provide a rationale for how these items are evaluated in practice to ensure that NCTE standards are

addressed. Some programs have developed NCTE standards-specific rubrics that they use with a generic unit-wide assessment. A fourth option is to use an NCTE specific assessment completed during a pre-student teaching practicum. The latter, however, may have too limited a scope to be of much use as a major assessment of pedagogy applications in English language arts.

**19. What is the best strategy for choosing other assessments to enhance our report (i.e., assessments 7 through 8 for most program reports)?**

The strategy for choosing which additional assessments to submit could be based on several factors. For example, it could be that your content-based assessments are relatively weak, and your report might benefit from another assessment that demonstrates candidate mastery of content. Or it might be that your required assessments overall pay short shrift to one or more of the NCTE standards. In that case, it might be prudent to submit an assessment and data that are more closely aligned to those standards. Another possibility is that your candidate data across assessments do not demonstrate the strengths of your program the way you would like, but you have another key assessment in which your candidates consistently perform well and which you can show is clearly aligned with key NCTE standards.

**20. In the area for faculty information, should we include faculty from Arts and Sciences who teach the content courses that our candidates are required to take?**

The only faculty listed here should be faculty who teach key content courses (e.g., adolescent, English, American, and minority literature, English grammars and language, literary criticism, etc), faculty who teach methods courses, and faculty who supervise clinical experiences; these may come from English and/or education. Reviewers will be particularly interested to see the English faculty who are involved in the program. Adjunct and part-time faculty should only be listed if they have taught or provided other services for the program during the most recent academic year.

**21. On that same form—where we list three contributions for each faculty member in the areas of scholarship, leadership, and service—should we list a contribution in each of these three areas for each faculty member?**

No. A faculty member might choose to list three scholarly publications as his or her major contributions. However, if all faculty list scholarship as their contribution, the program report preparer may want to ask some faculty to highlight leadership or service experiences instead, in order to demonstrate that overall program faculty are contributing in all three areas.

**22. How long does a program carry the designation of Nationally Recognized?**

The designation lasts as long as the teacher education unit within which the program is housed is NCATE accredited; the accreditation cycle for NCATE approved institutions is five to seven years. When the unit reaches the end of that cycle, it must go through a continuing accreditation review by NCATE; this includes a review of all of its programs by specialty organizations such as NCTE.

**23. If we have to file a revised report, can we assume the reviewers will have access to our original report?**

Under the new AIMS system, reviewers have access to your initial report. NCATE tries to make the prior program and recognition reports available, but sometimes the technology does not allow this. If there is key information in the original review that you believe reviewers might have missed, you can insert that information in the appropriate section(s) of your revised report. However, if an explanation was not sufficient in the first review, simply repeating the explanation in the revised report will be unlikely to change the reviewers' decision. For further information on submitting a revised report, see *Guide for Preparing the NCTE/NCATE Program Report for the Preparation of English Language Arts Teachers*.

#### **24. How many times may we submit a revised report?**

For programs that are Recognized with Probation or Further Development Required, NCTE will review up to two (2) revised reports. Programs need to understand that if they are not Nationally Recognized they have up to 18 months in which to submit a revised or completely new report. Since the reasons for not being Nationally Recognized usually revolve around assessments and data, the program should not rush to resubmit; instead, it is advisable to take as much time as possible to ensure all conditions cited in the review have been addressed, that new or revised assessments have not only been designed but tested and candidate data collected and analyzed before the revised or new report is submitted. Such precautions are likely to increase the possibility of National Recognition. Programs that are Recognized with Conditions are encouraged to meet those conditions within the 18 month time frame or they may lose their recognition decision and become either recognized with probation or with further development required.

#### **25. Is it possible to talk to the review team about our report?**

Reviewers are not identified to the institution. Questions about the report should be directed to the appropriate individual. Questions pertaining to electronic components or related factors should be directed to NCATE Contact: Dr. Margie Crutchfield, NCATE, 2010 Massachusetts Avenue NW Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036-1023; E-mail: [margie@ncate.org](mailto:margie@ncate.org); Tel: 202-466-7496; Fax: 202-296-6620. Queries about standards, program faculty training, or report content should be directed to NCTE Contacts: Leni Cook, Coordinator, NCTE/NCATE Program Reviews, E-Mail (preferred): [cooklg@cox.net](mailto:cooklg@cox.net); Tel: 310-377-3701; Fax: 310-377-2031 or Patricia Lambert Stock, NCATE/NCTE Liaison, National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 W. Kenyon Road, Urbana, IL 61801-1096; E-mail: [plstock@msu.edu](mailto:plstock@msu.edu); Tel: 217-278-3632; Fax: 217-328-0977.

#### **26. Where do I find more information about NCTE Standards for the Preparation of English Language Arts Teachers, and the NCTE/NCATE review process?**

In addition to the contact people indicated in Question 24, a number of reference sources can prove useful to those trying to understand and/or prepare for the review process:

All resources provided by NCTE can be found on the NCTE/NCATE Connection Page on the NCTE website:

[www.ncte.org/cee/ncate/program](http://www.ncte.org/cee/ncate/program)

To understand the format and content required for an electronic program review, view the program review template at <http://www.ncate.org/ProgramStandards/NCTE.doc>.

See also *Guidelines and Procedures for the NCATE Web-based Program Review System* available at <http://www.ncate.org/institutions/process.asp?ch=10>. This site contains a number of useful resources that will provide insight into the electronic reporting system used by NCATE for program reviews.