

Top 10 Mistakes to Avoid When Preparing Your NCTE Program Report

The following list was written originally by National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and later modified by National Council of Teachers of English to take a humorous look at a very serious topic. No program wants to fail to be nationally recognized. No reviewer wants to be forced to make a negative recognition decision. In order to present your program as the strong English education program it is, carefully read this list and avoid the common mistakes reviewers and audit team members see when they read program reports.

- 1) **Forget to include alignment to the standards or mark all the standards as being met by all assessments.** The NCTE decision rule is based on a holistic evaluation of assessment evidence based on the standards and their indicators. Failure to provide alignments for all assessments to the standards makes it impossible for reviewers to determine whether or not the standard is met by the evidence provided. It is also improbable that the program has designed and implemented assessments that focus on all the different standard areas within a single assessment.
- 2) **Use only generic assessments.** At the Unit level, it may be important to have “common assessments” that work across all content areas or programs, but at the Program Review level, assessments must be able to provide evidence for the specific SPA standards. A generic assessment may be adapted to be English-specific by including an addendum or special scoring instructions that allow the assessment data to provide evidence of meeting the NCTE standards and indicators.
- 3) **Don’t include the required amount of data.** Check with your institution’s NCATE coordinator to determine the data requirement for your report (which is dependent upon when you are submitting your report, but will be 1-3 years). If data is not available because an assessment is new, describe that in the narrative and include information about when you expect to collect data.
- 4) **Prepare your report from only one viewpoint.** The NCTE standards and indicators include content, pedagogy, and attitude standards. Regardless of your institution’s departmental structure, it is important to have input from both the English content and English education faculty members to ensure that there is adequate evidence of candidate content and pedagogical knowledge, skills, and dispositions (attitudes).
- 5) **Be vague and unclear in your assessment descriptions or scoring guides/rubrics.** Remember that reviewers are English or English education faculty members at other institutions, but they are not from your state or familiar with your institution or your state testing and licensing requirements in any way. Be brief in writing descriptions, but be sure to clearly include enough information so that someone can understand the assessment completely without any information other than what is included in the report. Also, be sure that scoring guides or rubrics are clear, complete, and aligned to NCTE standards and indicators.

- 6) **Use grades as an assessment without providing the required content-specific information and grading scale.** Carefully read the NCTE requirements for using grades as an content assessment (See the [Guidelines for Using and Documenting Course Grades as a Program Assessment](#) on the NCTE website, <http://www.ncte.org/cee/ncate/program>) Without the required descriptions and scoring guide that shows how grades are assigned, you cannot claim that the content standards and/or their indicators are met by candidates' grades.
- 7) **Ignore the information provided by NCTE to support institutions.** NCTE provides guidance and support information in multiple ways –on the NCTE web site, <http://www.ncte.org/cee/ncate/program>, program report compiler training sessions at the regional, state and institutional level, and sessions at the NCTE Annual Conventions and the AACTE/NCATE Institutional Orientation conferences. Information available from NCTE includes a Preparation Guide, the Program Standards and rubrics, representative samples (**NEW**) of required assessments, and guidelines for the use of grades as a (**NEW**) program assessment, all found on the NCTE web site. Also the NCTE/NCATE Program Coordinator is available to answer questions and provide assistance via e-mail.
- 8) **Reference inappropriate standardized testing in Assessment 1.** Assessment 1 should only focus on English language arts examinations. References to basic skills testing such as PRAXIS I are inappropriate and cannot be used to address any of the NCTE Standards. Generic pedagogy tests are not recognized by NCTE as meeting pedagogy and attitude standards that require engagement in an English language arts classroom.
- 9) **Copy and paste from another SPA report.** There may be places where it is possible to use the same language in multiple SPA reports; however, be sure you do not accidentally include inappropriate information. There have been multiple cases in which assessment descriptions have been duplicated from other reports including the alignment to SPA standards other than NCTE; rubrics and data from other content areas; inappropriate standardized test scores; and narratives that focus on areas other than English language arts licensing.
- 10) **Make technology faux pas that make reviewing difficult.** Using all of the capabilities of Word or other software is a good idea when preparing reports, but be sure your documents are complete and ready for viewing by people outside your report compiling team. There have been multiple cases in which documents were submitted with tracked changes still showing or contradictory documents such as different versions of the same assessment description or data charts. Other problems include saving in an orientation different from how the document was written (landscape v portrait).