

**Possible Alternative Accreditation Activities for
NCATE-Accredited PACT Institutions
Professional Services Division
April 2009**

Overview of this Report

This agenda item begins a conversation about the possibility of some institutions participating in alternative activities during the Commission's accreditation cycle. Some NCATE-accredited California institutions which adopted the Performance Assessment for California Teachers (PACT) as their teaching performance assessment model are interested in proposing a pilot to both NCATE and the COA. The purpose of this agenda item is to introduce the topic and allow the COA to ask questions that may assist the interested institutions in framing their request for a pilot. This topic will return to the COA's agenda at the May 2009 meeting for further discussion.

Staff Recommendation

This is an information item only.

Background

The Commission has a long history of working with the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to align California's accreditation activities with the national professional organization. NCATE's new president, James G. Cibulka, has announced his interest in considering the option to allow accredited teacher education institutions to focus their accreditation activities on "continuous improvement" rather than compliance to specific standards, http://www.ncate.org/public/30509_edweek.asp. Accredited institutions wanting to pursue this option would have to first, demonstrate an "adequate" level of performance based on current outcome data before applying to participate in the continuous improvement process.

Commission staff has been involved in these types of conversations with NCATE for a number of years. For a number of years, NCATE has had an option where institutions can submit candidate assessment data instead of participating in a more traditional accreditation site visit. This option has not yet been implemented by any institution.

In addition, in late March 2009, NCATE released its proposal for possible redesign of its accreditation system: For institutions seeking continuing accreditation, it appears that NCATE is proposing two options:

Units will have two options for their accreditation review. One is "continuous improvement" in which the unit will report changes since the previous visits and focus its self-study on assessing itself against the target level of one or more of NCATE's standards. The second option will focus the self-study on a Transformation Initiative related to one or more standards that improves educator preparation at the institution and informs the work of the field at large. [Figure 1](#) outlines the requirements for both options.

<http://www.ncate.org/public/proposedRedesign.asp>, accessed on March 26, 2009)

Later in the document, NCATE states that it is interested in piloting parts of the proposed revised system. It appears that a proposal from the California institutions could qualify as a pilot as defined in the article.

NCATE would like to work collaboratively with institutions that may be interested in volunteering to test parts of the proposed new system. These pilots will provide valuable information as the redesigned accreditation process is developed and refined over the next few years. Some institutions are testing streamlined processes in current visits and will continue to do so during the next academic year. Institutions with visits in the 2010-2011 academic year may choose to test a continuing improvement visit. NCATE is already discussing the Transformation Initiative with a number of institutions. Several proposals for testing this option will be submitted this spring. Any institution that would like to test the redesigned process or one of the proposed options for continuing accreditation should contact NCATE staff to discuss the possibilities.

Commission staff will continue to work with NCATE to understand the proposal and bring additional information to the COA at a future meeting.

Discussion of possible alternative accreditation activities

In January 2009, PACT leadership and California State University San Jose (CSUSJ) hosted a meeting to discuss the use of PACT data in accreditation, options for streamlining the NCATE accreditation process, and focusing the accreditation process on continuous program improvement. NCATE President Cibulka and Senior Vice President Donna Gollnick attended the meeting as did representatives from other NCATE-accredited, PACT California institutions. Commission staff, Larry Birch, Director of the Professional Services Division, and Teri Clark, Administrator of Accreditation both attended the meeting representing the Commission

At that meeting, NCATE reiterated its interest in entertaining proposals from PACT institutions related to alternative accrediting models. Given that PACT data represents some of the closest “outcomes-based” information available on teacher education that exists currently in the nation, NCATE is particularly interested in pursuing these efforts by collaborating with PACT institutions. NCATE suggested that PACT institutions submit a proposal for a pilot that could be discussed at its spring 2009 meeting.

The meeting topics continue to be discussed via conference calls between individuals who attended the meeting. It was agreed that the institutions were interested in submitting a proposal for a pilot project to both NCATE and COA and the details of a possible proposal were discussed. Should the COA and NCATE agree to continue exploring this possibility, two NCATE-accredited, PACT institutions volunteered participate as pilot institutions. The two institutions are the University of San Diego and the University of the Pacific. Both institutions are in the Orange cohort with their site visits scheduled in 2010-2011.

A number of questions have been raised and discussed by the group.

- For institutions with robust candidate assessment data (e.g., multiple years of valid and reliable data including TPA data), what accreditation activities might be waived or modified?
- How might an inquiry model be utilized in the NCATE and California accreditation process? What documents might be required to demonstrate the ability to engage in program improvement? The goal is to define a process and generate documentation that is both informative of institutional quality and a more useful activity internally than the current binders documenting inputs.
- PACT is a performance assessment for general education teacher preparation programs. What will other approved educator preparation programs (special education, administrative services, school counseling...) do if a pilot of alternative activities is approved by both the Committee on Accreditation (COA) and NCATE? Can all programs at an institution participate in the pilot irrespective of the formal nature of their data collection activities?

It would be helpful for the COA to discuss the questions above, in light of the information provided below. The discussion will provide guidance to the interested institutions and Commission staff as they continue to work on a specific proposal.

If the COA supports a currently accredited institution (holding both NCATE and CTC accreditation) in piloting selected alternative accreditation activities, it would be expected that the institution would need to propose the specific focus and activities that it would commit to. Presented, for discussion purposes, in Appendix A beginning on page 5 of this agenda item is an example of one institution's current thinking on how a Focused Inquiry pilot might work including the rationale, set of research questions and possible anticipated outcomes:

Possible Considerations for the COA

The COA is encouraged to address the following issues and to provide guidance to the Commission staff and institutions interested in piloting the continuous improvement option:

1. Biennial Reports are the Commission's accreditation activity through which candidate and program effectiveness data are submitted to the Commission. If an institution pilots the submission of data as evidence that the program is operating effectively, it seems that the institution would need to continue to submit Biennial Reports.
2. Program Assessment is the Commission's accreditation activity through which an approved program demonstrates that it is still meeting the adopted program standards. Is it acceptable for a program that is able to submit robust and reliable candidate data showing that the program completers have demonstrated the expected knowledge and skills, to be excused from having to submit documents for Program Assessment?
3. Site visits are the Commission's accreditation activity through which institutional infrastructure issues and compliance with the Common Standards (and for institutions accredited by both the CTC and NCATE, the NCATE Unit standards-- <http://www.ncate.org/documents/standards/NCATE%20Standards%202008.pdf>) are assessed. What type of modifications to the accreditation site visit, if any, would be appropriate for an institution that

has submitted robust and reliable data demonstrating that program completers have the necessary knowledge and skills for the credential?

Next Steps

The COA's discussion will guide staff in working with the interested institutions and developing an agenda item to bring back to the COA at the May 2009 meeting.

Appendix A

University of San Diego Proposal for Focused Inquiry

Program

The University of San Diego School of Leadership and Education Sciences is fully accredited by the CTC and NCATE (2004). Our teacher education faculty adopted the PACT following participation in the PACT pilot. It has been fully implemented including embedded signature assignments and the culminating teaching event.

Research Area

The area chosen by the faculty and administration to investigate is the effectiveness of all aspects of the field experiences for prospective teachers. The overall goals go beyond compliance with standards and create a comprehensive, best practices sequence of teacher candidate field experiences.

Rationale

There is no lack of literature on the importance of the field experiences in teacher education, and the quality of the field placements and cooperating teachers are certainly key factors (Gentry, 2007; Macy, 2009; Darling Hammond 2005). Field experiences may be the most important aspect of current teacher training, and they provide a pivotal opportunity for assessment of teaching proficiency. USD is currently providing placements for single subject, multiple subject and special education teacher candidates and we want to ensure that students are getting the best possible experience that they can.

In addition, for several years, the practices and procedures for managing field experiences at USD have lacked clear and consistent guidelines and comprehensive oversight. There has been a growing concern about the impact of the ensuing inconsistencies on candidate's performance. Several steps have been taken and others are in progress to improve the situation. At a fall 2007 department-wide retreat, faculty and administration in the Department of Learning and Teaching identified field experiences as an area that would benefit from more careful study. In summer 2008, a new position, Director of Professional Services, was created. In fall 2008, the director was hired and the decision was made to conduct a examination of field experiences. The director was charged with leading a comprehensive review of all aspects of field experiences for multiple and single subject teacher candidates. This review is being framed as a research study to facilitate the development of a careful plan, appropriate and accurate data collection and analysis, and sharing the results with faculty to make decisions about the USD field experience for Multiple and Single Subject Credential Candidates, and Education Specialist Credential Candidates.

Some of the groundwork has been laid to facilitate the proposed inquiry. The Director of Professional Services has developed a relationship with Director of Field Experiences for the Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) and Educational Administration (Ed Admin) credentials.

A targeted outreach for new supervisors in fall 2008 resulted in the hiring of 5 new supervisors who brought greater diversity of the field experience supervisory staff. And, most importantly, in February 2009, the director of Professional Services worked with all faculty in the Department of Learning and Teaching at a department-wide faculty retreats. Faculty groups determined quality criteria for the 4 elements of field experience:

1. Practicum conducted during methods classes.
2. Selection of school sites.
3. Attributes and necessary training for cooperating teachers.
4. Content and delivery model of student teaching seminar.

From these discussions, four areas for further research were framed as questions and form the foundation of the current proposed study.

Research Question(s)

1. What is the appropriate sequence of developmental field experiences for teacher candidates (i.e., pre-practica observation(s), practica, and full-time student teaching)?

Research Design

Methodology: Candidate records will be examined to compare PACT performance of candidates taking varied sequences of courses that include observation, practicum, and full-time student teaching.

Data to be Collected:

- A. candidate course sequences for two years of candidates who have taken the PACT Assessment
- B. scores on each competency section of the PACT (grouped into average scores for Context, Planning, Instructing, Assessing, and Reflecting)

Data Analysis: We will determine if there are performance differences on specific PACT competencies between groups of candidates who take courses in the intended sequence (courses with observation, practicum, field experiences) or alternate sequences (e.g. practica, courses with observation, field experience; practicum, field experience, courses with observation or taking practicum and courses with observation concurrently).

Planned Use of Results by Faculty: Faculty will examine the results. If different sequences yield different results, they will determine if course sequences need to be required. Formal measures will be taken as needed.

2. Are candidates better prepared for classroom teaching if assessments of their work throughout the program are aligned with PACT competencies?

Research Design

Methodology:

Three years (2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009) of PACT data during a period when assignment and rubrics were not aligned to PACT competencies will be compared with one year (2009-2010) and then two years (2010-2011) of PACT data. We will examine overall performance and performance in the five competency areas (Context, Planning, Instructing, Assessing, and Reflecting)

Data to be Collected:

- A. rubrics used from 2006-2007 to 2008-2009, revised rubrics used 2009-2010 and 2010-2011
- B. USD candidate PACT scores within and across competencies
- C. credential area for PACT for candidates

Data Analysis: Several analyses will be conducted: key comparison: candidate PACT performance before alignment of rubrics to PACT competencies and after alignment; comparison by PACT Assessment area before and after the use of PACT aligned rubrics; comparison of multiple and single subject candidate performance in and across each of the two time frames

Planned Use of Results by Faculty: Faculty will examine these results to determine if the relationship between aligning assignment rubrics and the PACT assessment performance of students. Further, they will discuss the degree to which they have made the relationship explicit to their students and decide how this information should be conveyed to students.

3. What is the optimum number of, and length of, student teaching placements

Research Design

Methodology: Both benchmarking of other programs and an examination of two student teaching experiences (one semester and two semesters) at USD.

Data to be Collected:

- A. review of previous research information done at other universities and in other programs
- B. best practice data from other universities
- C. supervisor ratings of specific student skills during student teaching (keyed to PACT competencies)
- D. USD candidate PACT scores within and across competencies

Data Analysis: We will examine the practices of other universities and research studies that compare length of student teaching and candidate performance. We will compare the PACT competency scores and overall PACT scores for USD candidates who have had one semester of student teaching with those who have had two semesters of student teaching. The first year of data that is available is for 2008-2009 because that is the first year we tried a program that includes two semesters of student teaching. This will be tracked through 2010-1011.

Planned Use of Results by Faculty: The Director of Professional Services and faculty members will use the results to determine if there are differences in the performance of candidates who had two semesters of student teaching and those with one semester. This will have implications for design delivery of the fieldwork part of the program.

4. What are optimum placement options in schools and/or classrooms for teacher candidates?

Research Design

Methodology: An important part of researching this question will be looking at research studies to see if this question has been researched previously and what those findings are. We will also contact other teacher education programs to examine their site placement criteria and benchmark other programs that are held as model placement sites by AACTE and other credible groups.

Data to be Collected:

- A. review of previous research information done at other universities
- B. best practice data from other universities

C. comprehensive list of possible placement options in the San Diego region
Data Analysis: We will first examine the literature to see if the ideal placement site characteristics have been studied and what is known. We will contact other programs that place student teachers and see if they have identified any “best practice” criteria. Then we will identify sites that are considered exceptional to determine the characteristics of those sites.
Planned Use of Results by Faculty: A list of criteria for site identification and inclusion will be created and implemented to facilitate the addition of only those sites that will provide good learning experiences for our student teachers.

Timeline

We are planning a joint CTC/NCATE accreditation site visit in the spring of 2011. As a member of the PACT consortium, we volunteered to prepare a pilot proposal in conjunction with the University of the Pacific, which is also in CTC’s Orange Cohort. The proposed programs may serve as models for other PACT institutions seeking NCATE accreditation through a focused inquiry design. If approved, results of the parts of this study would be written into papers to be submitted for publication in scholarly journals, such as *Issues in Teacher Education* and *Teacher Education Quarterly*, publications of the California Council on Teacher Education. Proposals to present this research would be submitted for presentations at conferences, such as the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and the California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE).

The following timeline lists highlights of the current accreditation cycle with the inclusion of steps related to the proposed program.

- Year 1: 2005-2006**
 Inquiry process not yet started
- Year 2: 2006-2007**
 Identification of area of inquiry
- Year 3: 2007-2008**
 Data Gathering and Analysis at Site
 Faculty Retreats
 Approval of new position: Director of Professional Services
- Year 4: 2008-2009**
 Hire Director of Assessment Support and Director of Professional Services
 Hire 5 new supervisors
 Faculty Retreats
 Biennial Report to CTC; evidence of adequate candidate performance
 Program Assessment submitted March 2009 to CTC
 Data Gathering and Analysis at Site
 Submit proposal for Focused Inquiry Process
 Initiate Focused Inquiry Process
- Year 5: 2009-2010**
 Revise Program Assessment documents, including evaluation to date of Focused Inquiry Process

Conduct Self-Study; Data Gathering and Analysis at Site
Prepare NCATE Institutional Report

Year 6: 2010-2011

Review Focused Inquiry Process
Submit Biennial Report to CTC
Submit NCATE Institutional Report and CTC Preconditions
Host Joint Accreditation Site Visit with CTC and NCATE (Spring, 2011)
Continue Focused Inquiry Process
Provide CTC's Committee on Accreditation and NCATE's Board of Examiners with a status report on the progress of Focused Inquiry Process

Year 7: 2011-2012

Provide follow up information to CTC and NCATE if necessary
Continue Focused Inquiry Process
Assess student outcomes in relation to revised field experiences

References

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