

Continuing Discussion and Information on the Inclusion of Subject Matter Programs in the Commission's Accreditation System October 2009

Overview of this Report

This agenda item summarizes the COA's discussion of the inclusion of single subject matter programs in the Commission's accreditation system and provides additional information to contribute to the discussion.

Staff Recommendation

This item is for information only.

Background

At the August 2009 COA meeting, staff presented an agenda item (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/coa-agendas/2009-08/2009-08-item-16.pdf>) that initiated the discussion for including subject matter programs in the accreditation process. The item included background information on how subject matter programs were instituted through the Ryan Act (Chap. 557, Stats. 1970) which provided for two pathways, examination and coursework, to demonstrate subject matter competency for a teaching credential. The subject matter program coursework and examinations were intended to be equivalent in content knowledge. Subject matter programs and examinations were brought into alignment with K-12 student academic content standards through SB 2042 (Cap. 546, Stats. 1998). The subject matter examinations are administered through a private contractor while the subject matter programs are offered through institutions of higher education. Subject matter programs are equivalent to a major in the subject and are typically housed in the corresponding academic departments of these institutions. Each program sponsor must submit a document describing and providing evidence for the program to the Commission for approval.

Institutions may sponsor many subject matter programs or no subject matter programs. However, the CSU Chancellor has directed all universities in the CSU system to sponsor subject matter programs in at least the four core academic subjects: English, mathematics, science, and social science. All institutions with approved subject matter programs also sponsor teacher credential programs. At some institutions, subject matter programs are coordinated with the school of education. At others, they operate within each academic department, independently of the schools of education.

Subject Matter Competence by Coursework Versus Examination

Subject matter competency in some subjects is predominantly met by examination, while in others it is mainly met through completion of a subject matter program. A number of factors may contribute to which route predominates, such as the availability of subject matter programs or examination pass rates. A chart comparing the number of single subject credentials granted by program and by examination can be found in Appendix A. In some subjects such as agriculture, the use of programs far outweighs the examinations, while in other subjects such as biology, examinations predominate. However, in many subjects the two routes are more evenly used, such as English, home economics and social science. Overall, slightly more single subject credentials are granted by examination (53%) than by subject matter program (47%), even though not all

universities offer all subject matter programs. These data suggest the importance of subject matter programs in California.

The Current Review Process

Subject matter program documents are reviewed by subject matter experts through coordination by Commission staff. Minimum qualifications for reviewers are an academic major or degree and teaching experience in the subject of the review. Institutions that submit program documents for review and approval are encouraged to nominate subject matter experts to participate in the review process, so some reviewers are also program coordinators or faculty. K-12 teachers are encouraged to participate, and some reviewers also score subject matter examinations for the contractor. Since they have a vested interest in the implementation of the standards, many reviewers are authors of the standards. The standards panel members were selected based on subject matter expertise and experience as well as a set of criteria that ensured equitable representation on such factors as gender, ethnicity, and region. Each panel consisted of at least a dozen educators; panel members' names and education affiliations are listed at the beginning of each subject matter handbook.

Commission staff is responsible for training reviewers and coordinating teams to review documents in as timely a manner as possible. The training entails two full days of orientation to the process and guided review of an actual program document. At least two reviewers must reach consensus, through a thorough review of the claims and evidence of the document, that a program meets all standards and can be recommended to the Commission for approval. If reviewers cannot determine that standards are met through information and evidence in the document, program sponsors are provided with a report that asks for additional details about the program. Program sponsors can then resubmit the revisions to the program, receiving ongoing feedback from the review team until all standards are found to be met.

Sponsors may respond to the findings of the review at their convenience with clarifications, additions, or revisions to the document. The "resubmitted" documents are usually reviewed by the same reviewers who continue this process until they are satisfied that all standards have been met and that the program is ready to be recommended to the Commission for approval. The Commission is then presented with a summary of the subject matter programs for approval through the Consent Calendar. After the Commission decides on approval, a program may begin to recommend candidates for credentials with subject matter competence based on the approved program. Currently, the approval status of a subject matter program then remains in effect until five years after new future standards are approved without further review or oversight.

The approval process is arduous and rigorous, from developing a document that defines and provides evidence for the program, through critical professional review, and revision where necessary to meet the standards. This is especially so since the present subject matter standards require programs to meet not only the standards but all required elements for each standard. Subject matter programs are not required to respond to the Commission's Common Standards as other teacher preparation programs do. However, the current subject matter standards include ten *Standards Common to All Subject Matter Programs* that address such topics as program philosophy, advising, assessment, field experience, and technology. The additional subject matter standards focus on the subject matter that is included in the program.

The Commission has recently undertaken discussions to streamline the review process in order to increase the number of approved subject matter programs available to candidates across the state. At the October 2009 Commission meeting (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/agendas/2009-10/2009-10-2E.pdf>), the Commission took action, effective immediately, to streamline the review process by:

1. changing the required elements of the standards to the guidance for programs,
2. limiting the length of narrative responses, and
3. encouraging the use of matrices.

The Commission also directed staff to develop an advisory panel to convene early in 2010. The advisory panel will be charged with reviewing and developing recommendations related to subject matter programs and the current *Standards Common to All* to be presented to the Commission later in 2010. As noted in the August COA agenda item, fewer single subject matter programs are approved under the new standards (160) than were approved under the prior standards (410).

As the Advisory Panel is convened and completes its work related to the *Standards Common to All* subject matter programs, staff will update the COA. The work of the panel, and any subsequent Commission action related to the standards, should be considered as the COA plans how to integrate the subject matter programs into the accreditation system. It may be that some form of inclusion of subject matter programs in the accreditation system could take the place of some aspects of the initial review, allowing for continuing limited oversight through the accreditation system.

Other Review Processes and Partnerships

At the August meeting, the COA noted that subject matter programs within academic departments may participate in a variety of other types of reviews and questioned whether any of those reviews might be duplicative of California accreditation activities. To expand that discussion, staff collected the following information on several types of reviews in which subject matter programs already participate.

University reviews typically occur every five years. Regional accreditation, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), reviews are conducted every ten years. Reviews by national standards organizations are conducted at varying intervals. Each of these different reviews or assessments adheres to its own foci or standards. For instance, university and WASC reviews focus on requirements for program effectiveness each based on their own separate criteria. National standards organizations focus on their own standards for program reviews. State accreditation focuses on state standards. National and California standards are not completely aligned. In all cases, some of the data collected for the reviews may be relevant to other reviews, though they may be using the data for different program assessment criteria.

For example, WASC does not explicitly require subject matter programs to report on student outcomes data and/or other program assessment data. WASC is concerned with program assessment reports and student outcomes assessments in relation to programs that result in an

undergraduate or graduate degree. However, there may be considerable overlap between a subject matter program and an undergraduate degree program; in those instances, there may be student outcome data and other assessment information in a WASC report that can be used to assess a subject matter program. Where the degree program and the subject matter program are not consistent with one another, WASC may not be a mechanism for achieving efficiencies or synergies with California's accreditation cycle. As schools of education refine their data collection systems for California accreditation, they may be able to coordinate with subject matter programs to include data that has already been collected through other review processes but is relevant for teacher preparation.

Possible Outcomes of Including Subject Matter Programs in Accreditation

More coordinated efforts, that do not require additional data collection but more sharing of data already collected, could result in improved and increased partnerships between academic departments and the teaching profession. Because subject matter programs are usually housed in academic departments rather than schools of education, they may or may not have substantive connections to teacher preparation and K-12 schools. Some universities have even blended or overlapped their subject matter programs with teacher education. Programs may operate blended programs as long as they meet both the subject matter and preparation programs' standards. The present subject matter *Standards Common to All* have urged stronger education partnerships, but such relationships can be difficult to build without a direct connection to K-12 schools.

However, cycling subject matter data through accreditation of schools of education may result in more work on the part of the education programs. If subject matter programs are considered part of the unit for accreditation, education program partners may need to provide leadership for subject matter programs in preparing for accreditation activities since it may impact the unit accreditation decision. Many single subject program coordinators already act as liaisons between the subject matter programs and the Commission, coordinating the document development and submissions as well as the early field experiences.

Including subject matter programs in accreditation could even more closely align state with national accreditation, which already reviews subject matter. For institutions that participate in national accreditation, these inter-departmental partnerships already exist in some form. The COA may wish to investigate how closely subject matter standards used for national accreditation are aligned with California subject matter standards, which are aligned to California K-12 standards.

Therefore, most institutions are already collecting a variety of data for other forms of professional standing. It is possible that much of that data can be used for state accreditation reporting. In addition, inclusion of subject matter programs in accreditation could have the effect of standardizing the data on subject matter that is pertinent to teacher education, providing a stronger linkage between the two. Finally, academic department sponsors of subject matter programs currently have varying levels of interaction with the K-12 education community; inclusion in accreditation activities may provide new opportunities for these programs to develop K-12 partnerships.

Possible Suggestions for Including Subject Matter Programs in the Commission's Accreditation System

Presently teacher preparation programs submit biennial reports, program assessment documents, and self-study documents for accreditation. The COA may wish to consider including subject matter preparation programs in some of these activities. It is important to consider the demands of participation in accreditation activities, particularly in the current economic situation, in order to avoid jeopardizing the survival of subject matter programs.

1. One way to include subject matter programs in accreditation might be to require approved subject matter programs to submit a biennial report along with the other educator preparation programs at their institution. This report might not require the same type of information as is required from the other educator preparation programs. The specific content of a biennial report should be carefully considered, possibly by a small work group that includes individuals currently operating subject matter programs.
2. A different way to include subject matter programs in accreditation would be to ask all approved subject matter programs to indicate if there have been any modifications to the program since it was initially approved and to submit updated course syllabi during the institution's Program Assessment year.
3. Another way to include subject matter programs in accreditation would be to include team members in the accreditation site visits for subject matter programs. Team members, depending on the biennial report or program assessment information, could be assigned to conduct a focused site review of the subject matter program(s) during the site visit. The team member(s) would not have to be assigned with the exact same subject matter expertise since interviews and review of program documents could focus on larger or targeted concerns of the program.
4. It would be possible to propose additional options and transition timelines for one or more of the options identified above.

Next Steps

Staff will listen to the COA's discussion and based on the discussion could bring another agenda item, including a possible implementation timeline, to a future COA meeting for consideration and possible adoption.

Appendix A

Single Subjects by Subject and By Program or Exam Route, 2007-08

Content Area	Program	Exam	Total	Program %	Exam %
Agriculture	60	8	68	88%	12%
Art	258	113	371	70%	30%
Business	73	30	103	71%	29%
English	1034	1285	2319	45%	55%
Foreign Language: American Sign Language		2	2		100%
Foreign Language: Armenian	1		1	100%	
Foreign Language: Chinese	5		5	100%	
Foreign Language: Farsi		1	1		100%
Foreign Language: Filipino	1	1	2	50%	50%
Foreign Language: French	56	23	79	71%	29%
Foreign Language: German	13	3	16	81%	19%
Foreign Language: Italian	2		2	100%	
Foreign Language: Japanese	6	10	16	38%	63%
Foreign Language: Korean	1	4	5	20%	80%
Foreign Language: Latin	3		3	100%	
Foreign Language: Mandarin	1	49	50	2%	98%
Foreign Language: Portuguese	1		1	100%	
Foreign Language: Polish	1		1	100%	
Foreign Language: Punjabi	1		1	100%	
Foreign Language: Russian	2	2	4	50%	50%
Foreign Language: Spanish	311	240	551	56%	44%
Foreign Language: Vietnamese	2		2	100%	
Health Science	80	126	206	39%	61%
Home Economics	24	32	56	43%	57%
Industrial and Technology Education	26	33	59	44%	56%
Music	281	92	373	75%	25%
Physical Education	474	286	760	62%	38%
Social Science	782	1070	1852	42%	58%
Biological Sciences (Specialized)	14	69	83	17%	83%
Science: Biological Sciences	285	496	781	36%	64%
Chemistry (Specialized)	10	37	47	21%	79%
Science: Chemistry	99	118	217	46%	54%
Geosciences (Specialized)	4	17	21	19%	81%
Science: Geosciences	47	138	185	25%	75%
Physics (Specialized)	16	17	33	48%	52%
Science: Physics	72	53	125	58%	42%
Foundational-Level Mathematics	13	663	676	2%	98%
Mathematics	715	352	1067	67%	33%
Total	4774	5370	10144	47%	53%