

Discussion of Language Regarding the Commission's Common Standards and Preconditions

March 2012

Overview of this Report

This report provides information on language in the Commission's Common Standards and Preconditions that have been challenging for teams to work with during accreditation site visits and identifies an issue that is not presently addressed in the adopted Standards or Preconditions.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the COA discuss the issues identified in this item and provide direction to staff.

Background

The Commission is charged with adopting standards and preconditions that govern educator preparation in California. The Committee on Accreditation is charged to implement the Commission's accreditation system and as it works with reports from site visits, there are times that issues are identified related to the Commission's standards and/or preconditions.

This item presents information on three issues for the COA to discuss:

1. Precondition 1: Regional accreditation and the importance of notifying the Commission if the institution's regional accreditation changes
2. Common Standard 4 and a requirement that the faculty and instructional personnel "...are reflective of a diverse society...."
3. Clear language about an institutional grievance process

Regional Accreditation

In April 2011 the COA took action to advise the Commission that Precondition 1 needed modification to appropriately address a sponsor's responsibilities once it accepts a candidate into an approved educator preparation program (<http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/coa-agendas/2011-04/2011-04-item-12.pdf>). The revised Precondition is provided here:

(1) Accreditation and Academic Credit. To be granted initial institutional accreditation by the Commission to become eligible to submit programs or to be granted initial program accreditation or continuing accreditation by the Committee on Accreditation, the program(s) must be proposed and operated by a college or university that (a) is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges or another of the six regional accrediting associations, and (b) grants baccalaureate academic credit or post baccalaureate academic credit, or both. (This provision does not apply to professional preparation programs offered by school districts.)

For school districts or other non-regionally accredited entities wishing to offer an educator preparation program, the Superintendent or CEO of the district or entity shall submit verification of the governing board's approval of sponsorship of the program. The agreement to sponsor a program must include verification of the following:

Once a candidate is accepted and enrolls in an educator preparation program, the sponsor must offer the approved program, meeting the adopted standards, until the candidate:

- i) completes the program,
- ii) withdraws from the program,
- iii) is dropped from the program based on established criteria, or
- iv) is admitted to another approved program to complete the requirements, with minimal disruption, for the authorization in the event the program closes. In this event, an individual transition plan would need to be developed with each candidate.

Recently there have been some instances where an institution of higher education's regional accreditation status has changed. As an example, an institution has relinquished its WASC accreditation but the Commission was not apprised of the change in accreditation status. Staff suggests that an additional component of Precondition #1 should be that an accredited institution of higher education should notify the Commission within 30 days if its status regarding regional accreditation changes.

Faculty and Instructional Personnel

Common Standard 4 addresses issues related to an accredited institution's faculty and instructional personnel. Standard 4 is presented here:

Standard 4: Faculty and Instructional Personnel

Qualified persons are employed and assigned to teach all courses, to provide professional development, and to supervise field-based and/or clinical experiences in each credential and certificate program. Instructional personnel and faculty have current knowledge in the content they teach, understand the context of public schooling, and model best professional practices in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service. They are reflective of a diverse society and knowledgeable about diverse abilities, cultural, language, ethnic and gender diversity. They have a thorough grasp of the academic standards, frameworks, and accountability systems that drive the curriculum of public schools. They collaborate regularly and systematically with colleagues in P-12 settings/college/university units and members of the broader, professional community to improve teaching, candidate learning, and educator preparation. The institution provides support for faculty development. The unit regularly evaluates the performance of course instructors and field supervisors, recognizes excellence, and retains only those who are consistently effective.

The Commission's standards are designed to be the baseline of what is acceptable regarding educator preparation in California. Through recent accreditation activities, a phrase of Standard 4 has been identified as challenging for institutions to meet and it was pointed out that the phrase may require more than the baseline of acceptable practice. The phrase is "They (faculty and instructional personnel)

are reflective of a diverse society.” Clearly the Commission’s goal is that the faculty and instructional personnel at each institution accredited by the Commission should be reflective of the diverse society in California.

The current statement is a requirement that the faculty and instructional personnel at an institution must be found to be reflective of a diverse society or the standard has to be found to be no better than *Met with Concerns*. The current language of the standard does not really allow an institution to develop and implement a plan to diversify the faculty and instructional personnel and have the standard to be found to be fully *Met*.

Provided below is the language from the NCATE standards related to diversity of faculty. The descriptive language provided for Acceptable is what an institution must be doing if it is decided that the institution meets the standard.

4b. EXPERIENCES WORKING WITH DIVERSE FACULTY

UNACCEPTABLE

Candidates in conventional or distance learning programs interact with professional education faculty, faculty from other units, and/or school faculty who are from one gender group or are members of only one ethnic/racial group.^[16] Professional education and school faculty have limited knowledge and experiences related to diversity. The unit has not demonstrated good-faith efforts to recruit and maintain male and female faculty from diverse ethnic/racial groups.

ACCEPTABLE

Candidates in conventional and distance learning programs interact with professional education faculty, faculty from other units, and/or school faculty, both male and female, from at least two ethnic/racial groups.^[17] Faculty with whom candidates work in professional education classes and clinical practice have knowledge and experiences related to preparing candidates to work with diverse student populations, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities. Affirmation of the value of diversity is shown through good-faith efforts to increase or maintain faculty diversity.

TARGET

Candidates in conventional and distance learning programs interact with professional education faculty, faculty in other units, and school faculty from a broad range of diverse groups. Higher education and school faculty with whom candidates work throughout their preparation program are knowledgeable about and sensitive to preparing candidates to work with diverse students, including students with exceptionalities.

The Commission’s statement that the faculty is reflective of a diverse society can be seen in the Target language for the NCATE standards. Target language exceeds the minimum requirements of the standard. Staff is asking the COA to discuss if the current language of the standard is appropriate as the required baseline for all institutions approved by the Commission to offer educator preparation in California.

Clear Grievance Process

The Commission's Common Standards and Preconditions do not explicitly require an institution to have developed or implemented a grievance process. All institutions of higher education that are regionally accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) are required to have a grievance process as part of the regional accreditation. But over half the entities approved by the Commission are not institutions of higher education and are the Commission are not regionally accredited. Therefore school districts, county offices of education or other entities that are approved to offer education preparation by the Commission may or may not have clearly detailed grievance processes.

When staff attend a joint NCATE-CTC accreditation site visit, the NCATE portion of the team always asks for information on the institution's grievance process, how many grievances have been submitted and for evidence that the grievance process has been followed. Staff suggests that the COA consider whether it is appropriate for the Commission to require that each entity that is approved to offer educator preparation in California have a well-articulated grievance process and be able to provide evidence that the process is followed when grievances are submitted.

Next Steps

Based on the COA's discussion, staff could prepare additional agenda items for the COA's consideration and possible action.

