

Discussion of Options to Strengthen and Streamline the Program Assessment Process

August 2014

Overview of this Report

This report continues a discussion of the documentation required to be submitted for Program Assessment (PA). The overarching question is how can the Program Assessment process be strengthened and streamlined and whether this revision should be considered prior to the updating of the program standards for preliminary multiple and single subject programs.

Staff Recommendation

This is an information item.

Background

Program Assessment was implemented in 2007-08. Institutions in all the cohorts will have submitted Program Assessment documents under the current system once the documents from the Green Cohort are received in December 2014.

At the June 2012 meeting, the Commission directed staff to, “discuss with the Commission which standards provide the most leverage in terms of program analysis and quality improvements based on data. A list of key essential standards would serve to focus programs on a smaller number of high-impact, essential standards than is presently the case.” In addition, with respect to accreditation site visits, the Commission directed staff to, “work with stakeholders and the Committee on Accreditation to develop a more streamlined and targeted site visit model that is cost effective, rigorous, and focuses on the essential attributes of high quality educator preparation.”

In August 2012 the COA provided input regarding the possibility of streamlining Program Assessment as part of strengthening the accreditation process. <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/coa-agendas/2012-08/2012-08-item-13.pdf> The input from the COA has been considered and included in the draft being presented for discussion.

Current Requirements for Program Assessment

During the 2014-15 year, the focus for Program Assessment is to complete the process for all programs sponsored by institutions in the Green cohort. With the Green cohort submissions all the cohorts will have completed the current program assessment process one time. In 2015-16 we will begin the Program Assessment cycle again with the Yellow cohort which provides a timely opportunity to revisit the submission requirements for PA.

The Accreditation Framework language related to Program Assessment is provided in Appendix A and the language in the Accreditation Handbook is provided in Appendix B. Provided in Appendix C is a summary of the current requirements in Program Assessment.

The current program assessment process includes three parts. These parts are described below:

Part I: Provides the response to current Program Standards. The narrative provided in Part I is to indicate how the program is meeting each of the adopted program standards. The response may include charts or diagrams to help the readers understand the program. It is important to make sure that the response is precise and clear enough that a reader who has no understanding of the institution can know how it is meeting each part of each standard. In addition, programs will want to ensure that each response meets the level indicated in the standard. For example, if the standards call for "multiple, systematic opportunities to..." the narrative should include more than one opportunity. If the standard indicates that "candidates are required to demonstrate," then the response will need to indicate more than a lecture or reading. Part I includes a Program Summary, no longer than four pages in length, that serves as an "executive" summary of the full program narrative provided in Part I. The Program Summary provides a brief overview of the structure, course sequence and assessment of candidate competence of the credential program.

Part II Provides documentation to support Part I. The course syllabi provide this documentation. For example, if a program indicates that part of a standard is covered by a lecture or reading in a certain course, the readers can click on the link to that syllabus to find a reference to that activity there. If there is no reference, readers will indicate that *More Information is Needed*. In addition, if a certain course is cited as the place where an entire standard is met, then each part of the standard must have documentation in the syllabus of the course.

Part III Provides the documentation that supports the program's Biennial Reports. It includes assessments that are used to determine candidate competence, including rubrics, training information and calibration activities that the program reports on in the Biennial Report.

Discussion of Program Submission Requirements

The Commission's accreditation system is tasked with ensuring that all approved educator preparation programs are of high quality, meet the adopted standards, and focus on continuous improvement.

The institution's response to the program standards is one of the requirements in Program Assessment that programs and reviewers seem to find somewhat onerous. Institutions are required to prepare a lengthy complex document that is meant to be easily readable by the reviewers. This can be quite time consuming for the institution. Reviewers have also indicated frustration with the lengthy review process. Typically it takes a pair of readers two full days of dedicated review time to read and provide feedback for a sixteen standard program. Frequently, readers find themselves unable to finish the initial review at a two day meeting and end up having to finalize feedback after returning home. In these instances additional staff time must be spent in keeping up with the readers who have not finished.

In the August 2012 discussion the COA supported researching different ways of obtaining the information necessary to ensure that the program is meeting standards. The question discussed and input provided by COA: Should the review process differ in some way that would help streamline the process?

For discussion purposes, staff has included a partial rough draft of a possible narrative/matrix standard template (Exhibit A) and one sample matrix option (Exhibit B). These are included as separate documents to allow easier access. The standard template and sample matrix are possibilities that could help move the streamlining of PA forward while continuing to address the requirements of the standards. The following guidance from the COA was considered by staff as the streamlined draft PA template was prepared.

- Identify key components in the standards that will continue to require a narrative response
- Categorize the sections of each standard that can be confirmed through the use of a matrix or checklist
- Find ways to decrease the number of pages being submitted for PA

One possibility for streamlined Program Assessment that would utilize a matrix option follows:

Part I: Program Summary and Modified Narrative

- a) Summary of the program (2-4 pages) which include:
 - a. a list of required courses and prerequisites
 - b. a list of optional course requirements
 - c. field experience requirements and number of hours
 - d. student teaching requirements with the amount of time required included
(Items a-d could be required as a cover page to the summary)
- b) Limited Narrative Response for the identified key standard components

Part II: Matrix/Checklist plus Course Syllabi or Course of Study for all courses in the program

- a) Standards Alignment Matrix and/or Checklist that indicates the strategic location where the additional standard components are addressed (i.e., EDU304).
- b) Links to the syllabus may not be necessary for all standard items in the matrix (COAs input along with staff research will help inform the need for links).
- c) Site Visit team could review any matrix concerns identified or the PA readers could request more information as needed.

Part III: Blank Key Assessments

- a) Copies of Scoring Rubrics (of the key assessments in the Biennial Reports)
- b) Limited narrative that includes information on training and calibrating scorers.

Input from today's discussion will help guide the streamlining process and ensure that standards are sufficiently addressed to maintain the integrity of the accreditation system. The draft PA standards template is meant to further the discussion with COA and to provide one sample option

for streamlining and strengthening the PA process. Other types or combinations of documentation that may better serve the overall purpose could also be discussed.

Discussion of Possible Review Option Changes

Currently, the system requires that all parts of PA are reviewed by experts in the field. Over the past couple of years, it has become increasingly more difficult to find an appropriate number of reviewers with the appropriate expertise in order to review all of the documents needing to be reviewed each year. The Commission staff suspects refining and streamlining the system will, to some extent, address some of these challenges with individuals who found our current system too burdensome to participate as a reviewer. However, staff would like input from COA as to ways in which to address this challenge.

Staff suggests discussion of the following:

- 1) Would it be acceptable for program assessment documents to be reviewed by one reviewer with a spot check by staff? (Currently, two reviewers review each document and work together to determine if standards are preliminarily aligned).
- 2) Is there a role that Commission staff might play with certain standards examining compliance rather than quality or effectiveness?
- 3) Are there other ideas to enhance the number of reviewers and the efficiency and timeliness of the reviews?

Next Steps

Based on the COA's discussion and input, staff could prepare a more thorough streamlined PA template. If COA directs, the option to pilot the streamlined process with the Yellow cohort in early spring 2015 could provide valuable feedback from stakeholders for the upcoming MS/SS writing panel.

Program Assessment

3. Program Assessment

In the 4th year of each cohort cycle, an institution/program sponsor prepares and submits a Program Assessment document for each approved program. The specific activities related to Program Assessment are as follows:

a. **Program Assessment Document.** Each institution/program sponsor ensures that each approved program that is offered by an institution/program sponsor prepares and submits a Program Assessment Document. The document includes the following elements: 1) the most recently approved program document which includes modifications in the program since its approval, 2) current course syllabi *and faculty vitae**, 3) information on assessments used at key points in the program in order to determine candidate competence. The specific procedures and requirement for the Program Assessment Document are included in the *Accreditation Handbook*.

1. Review. Trained reviewers will determine whether the standards for each program area continue to be met. If there are questions, or more information is needed, Commission staff will communicate with an institution or program sponsor to request additional information. A professional dialogue will then take place between program sponsors and reviewers (facilitated through CTC staff) in order to ascertain the most complete sense of candidate competence and the ongoing program improvement efforts that are made. This process allows for a more complete understanding of the program prior to determining the findings.

2. Preliminary Report of Findings. Trained members of the BIR serve as readers and consider all information and come to “preliminary findings” for all program standards as well as recommendations and questions for the site visit. Program Standard findings are ‘Standard Met’, ‘Met with Concerns’, and ‘Not Met’. Document review procedures are set forth in the *Accreditation Handbook*.

3. Use of Results. The report from the readers is forwarded to the Committee on Accreditation. Readers submit any outstanding questions or areas of concern to the Committee on Accreditation and the Committee will ensure that the site review team investigates the issue(s). The Committee on Accreditation reviews the program reports, preliminary findings, and questions/areas of concern to assist in determining the size and composition of the site review team.

The preliminary findings of the reviewers will influence the size, scope, and nature of the 6th year site visit. If reviewers find no issues or concerns through program assessment, it may be determined that it is unnecessary to review the program in detail at the site visit. If reviewers identify issues that warrant further review or if questions remain unanswered at the conclusion of the Program Assessment, the 6th year site visit may include a more detailed review of such programs.

Specific documentation required in the Program Assessment is set forth in the *Accreditation Handbook*.

**Note: Faculty vitae are no longer required as part of Program Assessment. There are no program standards that require the reader to review the qualifications of faculty. These concepts are addressed in the Common Standards. This change has not yet been addressed in the Accreditation Framework.*

Chapter Six

Program Assessment

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the Program Assessment process, which occurs during year 4 of the accreditation cycle. The Program Assessment submission includes a clear description of how a program is currently operating. The required information includes the program narrative which describes the course of study candidates complete, and documentation about assessment tools used by the institution to ensure that all candidates recommended for a credential have satisfied the appropriate knowledge and skill requirements. Programs transitioning to new standards should refer to section IV of this chapter.

I. Purposes of Program Assessment

Program Assessment takes place in year 4 of the accreditation cycle and examines each approved credential program individually. It is the feature of the accreditation system that allows trained BIR members the opportunity to review each approved educator preparation program and determine whether the programs are preliminarily aligned to the relevant standards (approved California Program Standards, Experimental Program Standards, or National or Professional Program Standards). Results from the Program Assessment process inform the Site Visit that will take place in year 6 of the accreditation cycle.

II. Program Assessment Documentation

Program Assessment documentation is submitted for each approved educator preparation program offered by the institution. Each program can choose its submission date during year three of the accreditation cycle, from a list provided by the CTC. There are three parts to the Program Assessment document.

Part I—Meeting Each Standard

Part I is the narrative response to the current program standards, that is, how the program is meeting each of the program standards. In the preparation of Part I, those writing the responses must remember that re-phrasing the standard does not provide information on **how** the program is meeting the standard. Each program's response may be unique in how it meets the standards because the program was developed to reflect the institution's mission, needs of the surrounding area, philosophical beliefs, etc. Therefore, the response to each standard should clearly and succinctly state how the program is meeting all parts of the standard.

Part II—Course of Study/Syllabi

Part II includes the candidates' current course of study, to provide readers with the documentation that links the narrative response to the program's current practices. If a program claims that any or all of a standard is met in a course or professional development offering or formative assessment system activity, readers should be able to substantiate that claim by finding

documentation in the objectives, schedule, assignments, readings and other information noted in the course syllabi, professional development agenda, or formative assessment system documentation.

If the institutions use a particular form as a template or course outline that is required as the core of each course, it may submit that one course outline in the Program Assessment document. However, if each instructor designs their section of the course on their own, institutions must include each course syllabus for all courses taught in the two years prior to Program Assessment. Reviewers will need to read each one in order to substantiate the claims made in the narrative.

Part III—Assessment Information

Part III is the documentation that supports the program's Biennial Reports. It includes assessments that are used to determine candidate competence and program effectiveness, including rubrics, training information, and calibration activities that the program reports on in the Biennial Report.

For institutions reporting data from the TPA (Cal TPA, PACT or FAST models), there is no need to give the background on the development of the examination, validity and reliability information, etc. However, it is important to note how assessors are trained in the particular area, how often the scoring is calibrated, and the information particular to the location for how the TPA is administered.

For other programs, it will be necessary to provide more comprehensive information about the assessments being reported on in the Biennial Report. If observation forms are used to measure candidate competence, the standards or rationale on which the tool is based must be identified. Programs must describe how they ensure that all assessors are using institution-developed assessments in a similar manner. Programs must also describe the training and practice that are provided to assessors to ensure common scoring expectations.

This part will include only those assessment tools or processes used at key points in the program to determine whether candidates have developed the appropriate knowledge and skills and are ready to move to the next step or need remediation. This part will also include the assessment tools that are used to assess program effectiveness but only if data from those assessment instruments are reported in the most recent Biennial Report. Examples of these assessment tools or processes might be those used to determine when candidates are ready to assume fieldwork, how well candidates do in fieldwork, and when candidates can be recommended for the credential. In addition, program effectiveness information should also be included such as the results of surveys of completers and their employers to determine whether the program adequately prepared educators for their positions in school districts. For Second Tier credential programs like BTSA Induction, these might include participant tracking and pacing documents, protocols for benchmark meetings, and rubrics for portfolio reviews.

III. Review of Program Assessment Documents

The Program Assessment document will be reviewed by trained members of the Board of Institutional Review (BIR) members who have expertise in each program area. The reviewers

will also have access to the biennial reports that have been submitted in this accreditation cycle. Reviewers will be looking for the following:

- Does the narrative describe **how** the standard is met?
- Does the implementation, as described, meet the standard? That is, if there are key phrases in the standard, such as “multiple systematic opportunities to” or “candidates demonstrate in the field,” has the program demonstrated **how** it meets each key phrase within the standard?
- Does the documentation substantiate the claims made in the narrative? That is, does the narrative include links to syllabi or course of study examples of what the program narrative claims? Furthermore, does the program narrative or course of study link to assessments used to ensure that candidates develop the required knowledge and skill?

As the reviewers read, they are to determine if the standard is preliminarily met or if more information is needed. If more information is needed, they are to write clearly and specifically what additional information is needed and how it relates to one of the points above. For example, is more information needed on how the standard is met? Or, is documentation to support the narrative needed?

Once the reviewers have completed their work, a Preliminary Report of Findings review form will be sent by CTC staff to the institution. The institution will be encouraged to submit the additional information to ensure that the Program Assessment process is completed before the site visit begins. After the institution has submitted the additional information, the same reviewers will be asked to revisit the document and determine whether the additional information supports a finding that a standard is preliminarily aligned. The updated Preliminary Report of Findings will be sent by CTC staff to the institution and will identify any additional information that is still needed. This dialogue between institution and reviewers may continue until 4-6 months before the site visit. If there are questions or concerns that have not been resolved when the Program Assessment process concludes, the Administrator of Accreditation may include an additional member on the site visit team who can focus exclusively on the program.

The format of the feedback will provide information regarding each program standard, using a form similar to the one below:

**Program Assessment
Preliminary Report of Findings**

Status	Standard
<p>More Information Needed</p> <p>OR</p>	<p>Standard 1: Program Design</p> <p><i>Questions, Comments, Additional Information Needed:</i></p> <p>Identify the parts of the standard that did not have sufficient descriptive narrative, the parts of the standard where it was not clear “HOW” the program aligns with the standards, or what additional documentation needs to be provided.</p>
Preliminarily	Program Standard 2: Communication and Collaboration

Status	Standard
Aligned	<p><i>Questions, Comments, Additional Information Needed</i> Identify any evidence to be reviewed at the site visit</p>
	<p>Row for each program standard</p>

Additional Information

Additional information regarding Program Assessment is available on the Commission website at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/program-accred-assessment.html>. Those who are preparing Program Assessment documents may also contact CTC staff for technical assistance.

IV. Programs that are Transitioning to New Program Standards

Programs that are transitioning to newly adopted standards in the year that Program Assessment documents are due may, instead, submit a description of the processes the program is utilizing to transition to the new program standards. This document should include an analysis of changes that must be made to align the program to the new standards and the timeline by which those changes will be accomplished. The document should also describe how current candidates are being helped to complete their course of study while the program is transitioning to the new standards.

Programs that plan to transition to the new standards the year after the Program Assessment process is completed must submit updated copies of their program documents.

Appendix C: What is required in Program Assessment

Program Assessment	
Part I	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative describes the practices in place that meet the standards. • Clearly describes how the program is implemented and how program leadership knows the program is implemented consistently. • Narrative links to specific information in syllabi and the assessments to provide supporting documentation • Program Summary—4 page maximum
Narrative is linked to syllabi to provide documentation of what is presented in the program	
Part II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Syllabi/course of study are what is currently taking place and change throughout the life of the program as research changes, new articles written, etc. • Syllabi/course of study provides documentation of the content that addresses the curricular standards.
Assessments provided are linked to syllabi and reported on in the Biennial Reports	
Part III	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessments of candidate competence are provided and include what was reported in most recent Biennial Reports. (Part III) • May include additional assessments.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of how assessments are evaluated is presented. • Rubrics for the assessments are provided. • Observation forms are provided. • Information is provided that describes how the program ensures that faculty is scoring the assessments in a valid and reliable way.