Update on the Accreditation Handbook
January 2010

Overview of this Report

This report provides an update on the work to revise the *Accreditation Handbook* for discussion and input. The item contains four chapters that were updated by staff to reflect the implementation of the revised accreditation system during the 2009-10 year and thereafter. A fifth chapter, BIR Member Skills and Competencies, was created from some of the content previously included in Chapter Ten, Accreditation Site Visit Team Information, which now focuses exclusively on steps a BIR site team member must take to prepare for, and participate effectively in a site visit.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the COA discuss and adopt the proposed changes to Chapter One: Responsibilities of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the Committee on Accreditation, Chapter Two: Standards in Accreditation, Chapter 9: Activities During the 7th Year of the Accreditation Cycle, Chapter 10: Accreditation Site Visit Team Information, and Chapter Eleven: BIR Member Skills and Competencies. Staff, furthermore, recommends that the COA direct staff to post the adopted Chapters One, Two, Nine, Ten and Eleven, and bring additional updated chapters of the Handbook to the April 2010 COA meeting for approval.

Proposed Changes to Three Chapters of the Accreditation Handbook

During the May 2009 COA meeting, members and staff discussed the need to update the *Accreditation Handbook* to reflect the revised accreditation system. The COA directed staff to prepare one or more chapters for COA review and adoption at each subsequent meeting until the entire Handbook was updated and adopted. Edits for chapters 1, 2, 9, and 10 were identified that conform the chapters to current accreditation practices so that the chapters will be useful for institutions and accreditation review teams as they prepare for, and participate in an accreditation site visit. In particular, institutions and team members will understand the role of the Committee on Accreditation as it relates to the responsibility of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing to ensure that all educator preparation programs in California are aligned to the state standards (Chapter One) and the role of standards in the accreditation process (Chapter Two.) Institutions will be interested in Chapter Nine for guidance in utilizing the seventh year of the accreditation cycle. Members of accreditation site teams will learn how to prepare for an accreditation site visit (Chapter Ten). A new, proposed chapter, Chapter Eleven, identifies and discusses the critical skills and competencies required of effective BIR members. This chapter discusses skills essential for initial program review, Program Assessment review, and for the accreditation site visit.

Next Steps

Consistent with directions provided to staff at the May 2009 COA meeting, staff will continue to revise chapters in the *Accreditation Handbook* and will bring proposed revised chapters to the COA for its approval at future COA meetings.

Chapter One:
Responsibilities of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing and the Committee on Accreditation

Introduction

The Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) is responsible for ensuring that educators for California's public schools – from preschool through high school and adult education – are prepared in rigorous, high quality programs. The major purpose of the agency is to serve as a state standards board for educator preparation for the California public schools, the licensing and credentialing of professional educators in the State, the enforcement of professional practices of educators, and the discipline of credential holders in the State of California. The CTC works in tandem with a committee of professional educators appointed by the CTC, the Committee on Accreditation (COA), to implement California's accreditation system for educator preparation. Each of these bodies has specific responsibilities outlined in California law (California Ed Code sections 44000-44393), the California Code of Regulations, Title 5 CCR Sections 80000-80690.1, and further delineated in the *Accreditation Framework* (Attachment G).

The CTC establishes policy related to accreditation and the COA implements the policies. The statutes that distinguish the roles and responsibilities of these two bodies are found in California Education Code, Sections 44370 through 44374. These provisions, further, govern the *Accreditation Framework* and guided the development of this *Handbook*.

This chapter identifies the specific duties of each body that relate directly to the professional accreditation process. Institutions that prepare educators or that wish to add new credential programs under the *Accreditation Framework* should read this chapter.

I. Responsibilities of the Commission on Teacher Credentialing

The following list identifies duties and responsibilities of the CTC that are related to the initial approval and accreditation of educator preparation programs.

A. Adoption and Modification of the *Accreditation Framework.* The CTC has the authority and responsibility to adopt an *Accreditation Framework,* "which sets forth the policies of the CTC regarding the accreditation of educator preparation in California" (Education Code Section 44372(a)). The *Accreditation Framework* is found in Appendix G. The CTC may modify the *Framework* in accordance with Section 8 of the *Framework*.

B. Establishing and Modifying Standards for Educator Preparation. Pursuant to Education Code Section 44372(b), the CTC has the authority and responsibility to establish and modify standards for educator preparation in California.

C. Providing Initial Approval of Institutions. In accordance with Education Code Sections 44227(a) and 44372(c) and Section 2 of this *Framework,* the CTC determines the eligibility of an institution that applies for initial accreditation and that has not previously prepared educators for state certification in California. The CTC approves institutions that meet the criteria adopted for that purpose by the CTC. Institutional approval by the CTC establishes the eligibility of an institution to submit specific program proposals to the COA.

D. Hearing and Resolving Accreditation Appeals. The CTC hears appeals of accreditation decisions, which must be based on evidence that accreditation procedures or decisions were "arbitrary, capricious, unfair, or contrary to the policies of the CTC or the procedural guidelines of the COA" (Education Code Section 44374(e)). The CTC resolves each appeal, and the Executive Director communicates the CTC's decision to the COA, the accreditation team, and the affected institution. The Appeal Procedures are found in Chapter Six of this *Handbook*.

E. Appointments to the Committee on Accreditation. Pursuant to Education Code 44372(d) and Section 2 of this *Framework*, the CTC appoints members and alternate members of the COA for specific terms. The CTC selects the Committee members and alternate members from nominees submitted by the Nominating Panel. The CTC ensures the COA is professionally distinguished and balanced in its composition but does not appoint members to represent particular institutions, organizations or constituencies.

F. Addressing Issues, and Referring Concerns, Related to Accreditation. The CTC considers issues and concerns related to accreditation that it identifies, as well as those brought to the CTC's attention by the COA, postsecondary institutions, the CTC's staff, or other concerned individuals or organizations. At its discretion, the CTC may refer accreditation issues and concerns to the COA for examination and response.

G. Reviewing Annual Reports by the Committee on Accreditation. The CTC reviews *Annual Accreditation Reports* submitted by the COA. *Annual Accreditation Reports* include information about the procedures and results of the accreditation process, which until the recent revision, was comprised of findings from accreditation site visits and the outcome of Committee deliberations.

H. Annual Allocation of Resources for Accreditation Operations. The CTC annually allocates resources for accreditation operations to implement the *Accreditation Framework*. Consistent with the CTC's general practice, staff assignments to accreditation operations are made by the Executive Director, in accordance with state budgets, laws and regulations.

I. Jointly Sponsoring an External Evaluation of Accreditation Policies and Practices. The CTC shares responsibility with the COA for the design and implementation of a comprehensive evaluation of the accreditation process, including policies, the biennial reports, program assessment, site visits, training of Board of Institutional Review (BIR) members, and the selection of an external evaluator to conduct the evaluation, pursuant to Section 8 of the *Framework*.

II. Responsibilities of the Committee on Accreditation

The following list identifies duties and responsibilities of the COA that are related to the initial approval and continuing accreditation of educator preparation programs.

A. Determining Comparability of Standards. In accordance with Section 3 of the *Framework,* the Committee determines whether standards submitted by institutions under Option 2 (National or Professional Program Standards) provide a level of program quality comparable to standards adopted by the CTC under Option 1 (California Program Standards). If the Committee determines that the proposed standards are collectively comparable in breadth and depth to the CTC-adopted standards, the COA may approve the proposed standards as program standards in California.

B. Providing Initial Accreditation of Programs. The Committee reviews proposals for the initial accreditation of programs submitted by institutions that have been determined eligible by the CTC. In accordance with Section 3 of the *Framework,* new programs of educator preparation may be submitted under Options 1 (California Program Standards), 2 (National or Professional Program Standards), or 3 (Experimental Program Standards) . If the Committee determines that a program meets all applicable standards, the Committee grants initial accreditation to the program.

C. Continuing Accreditation Decisions. After reviewing the recommendations of accreditation teams, the Committee makes decisions about the continuing accreditation of educator preparation institutions and programs, consistent with Section 6 of the *Framework*. Pertaining to each institution, the Committee makes one of three decisions: Accreditation, Accreditation with Stipulations, or Denial of Accreditation.

D. Developing Accreditation Procedures. Consistent with the terms of Section 6, the Committee recommends appropriate guidelines for self-study reports and other accreditation materials and exhibits to be prepared by institutions. The Committee also adopts guidelines for accreditation team reports, which emphasize the use of narrative, qualitative explanations of team recommendations. The Committee may provide additional guidance to institutions, teams, and the Executive Director regarding accreditation visit procedures. The procedural guidelines of the Committee are published by the CTC in this *Accreditation Handbook.*

E. Monitoring the Accreditation System. The Committee monitors the performance of accreditation teams and oversees other activities associated with the accreditation system.

F. Submitting Annual Reports, Recommendations and Responses to the CTC. The Committee presents *Annual Accreditation Reports* to the CTC. *Annual Reports* include standard information about the dimensions and results of the accreditation process. The Committee also advises the CTC about policy changes to improve the quality and integrity of the accreditation process.

G. Holding Meetings in Public Sessions. The Committee conducts its business and makes its decisions in meetings that are open to the public, except as provided by statute.

H. Jointly Sponsoring an External Evaluation of Accreditation Policies and Practices. The Committee shares responsibility with the CTC for the design and implementation of a comprehensive evaluation of the accreditation process, including policies, the biennial reports, program assessment, site visits, training of Board of Institutional Review (BIR) members, and the selection of an external evaluator to conduct the evaluation, pursuant to Section 8 of the *Framework*.

Chapter Two:
Standards in Accreditation

Introduction

This chapter describes the role of the Common and program standards in the Commission on Teacher Credentialing's (CTC's) accreditation system. The chapter also discusses how standards are developed, how standards are revised, and how institutions and other program sponsors are affected when standards are revised. Institutions[1] that prepare educators and Board of Institutional Review (BIR) members will be interested in this chapter.

I. Common and Program Standards

There are two categories of accreditation standards that must be satisfied by institutions that prepare professional educators in California: 1) Common Standards, and 2) Program Standards.

A. Common Standards address aspects of program quality that should be common across all educator preparation programs in an institution. This category includes standards relevant to the institution's overall vision for, and leadership of, educator preparation programs within its organization. The Common Standards also embody expectations about the distribution of resources across different programs, the quality of faculty, and the adequacy of admissions and advising procedures. An institution provides documentation describing how it responds to each Common Standard, including information about individual programs when necessary.

B. Program Standards address the quality of program features that are specific to a credential. These include assessments, curriculum, field experiences, and the knowledge and skills to be demonstrated by candidates in the specific credential area. There are three program standards options available to institutions wishing to offer an educator preparation program. The institution must select the type of program standards it will use to seek initial program approval and future program accreditation. This selection will also guide the assignment and orientation of program reviewers. Once a program standard option has been chosen, the institution must respond to each standard in the selected option by providing program-specific information for review by the program reviewers. Institutions may select from the following options for program-specific standards.

[1] "Institutions" will be used to refer to all institutions or other entities that sponsor educator preparation programs.

- **Option 1. California Program Standards.** The CTC creates panels of experts from colleges, universities and school districts to develop standards for specific credential programs. These panels are guided by current research findings in the field of the credential and the California K-12 academic content standards and most current edition of the curriculum frameworks. They also consider standards developed by appropriate national and statewide professional organizations. If the national or professional standards are found to be appropriate for California, the panel may recommend that the CTC adopt them in lieu of developing new standards or revising the CTC's existing standards. After reviewing the recommendations of advisory panels and other experts, the CTC adopts California program standards for the initial and continuing accreditation of credential preparation programs. When revised program standards are adopted, institutions offering programs aligned to the former standards will be given instructions about when they must bring their current program into alignment with the revised standards.

- **Option 2. National or Professional Program Standards.** California institutions may propose to use program standards that have been developed by national or state professional organizations. These standards may be approved for use by the Committee on Accreditation (COA) to the extent that the proposed standards are comparable to those adopted by the CTC under Option 1 (California program standards). The analysis of comparability can be performed by the institution prior to submitting a request to the COA to use the national or professional standards, by the national or professional organization, or by CTC staff following a request to use the National or Professional Standards. Such a proposal may be submitted to the COA with a statement of the institution's reasons for requesting this option and a copy of the proposed National or Professional Program Standards. If the COA determines that the proposed standards are comparable to the California program standards, the COA will approve the proposed standards for use as program standards in the initial and continuing accreditation of the credential program. If the COA determines that the requested standards do not adequately address one or more aspects of the California Standards (Common and/or Program), the COA may approve the requested standards but also require the institution to address the additional aspects found in the California Standards.

- **Option 3. Experimental Program Standards**. For initial accreditation, an institution may present an experimental program proposal that meets the Experimental Program Standards adopted by the CTC pursuant to *Education Code* Section 44273. The Experimental Program Standards were designed to facilitate the development of innovative programs that are likely to expand the knowledge base about effective educator preparation practices. Experimental programs must have a research component to allow the investigation of focused research questions about key aspects of educator preparation.

Questions might include how to increase the numbers of math and science teachers, how to prepare teachers to work effectively in urban and low performing schools, or explaining the processes through which credential candidates acquire and demonstrate mastery of appropriate performance expectations, such as the Teaching Performance Expectations for the Multiple and Single Subject Credentials. In addition to a research focus, experimental program proposals must ensure that candidates completing the experimental program would possess the same knowledge and skills required by the CTC's regular program standards (Option 1) for the same credential. Approved experimental programs must report findings related to their research component on a biennial basis to the CTC. Upon consultation with the institution and with the COA, the CTC retains the authority to determine whether the findings support continuance of the experimental program under the experimental standards. For a copy of the Experimental Program Standards and additional information about this option, see the CTC's website at http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/STDS-prep-program.html.

II. Process of Program Standards Development and Revision

The initial development of the Common and program standards utilized panels of experts in educator preparation and from among practicing educators from colleges, universities, school districts and other educational entities. The panel members used information from current and confirmed research in the relevant areas, California's adopted K-12 content standards, and current curriculum frameworks to craft standards that would ensure that credential holders would be able to work effectively with California's highly diverse students. As appropriate, the panel also reviewed standards developed by national and statewide professional organizations.

The CTC adopted, and will continue to modify as necessary, a schedule for the regular review and revision of all adopted standards. The CTC follows established procedures for the use of expert panels, stakeholder comment, and field review to develop and revise standards. For information on the schedule of standards review and revision, please consult the CTC's Accreditation web page, http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/program-accred.html.

III. Directions to Institution Regarding Revised Standards

Institutions with educator preparation programs aligned to previous standards will be required to update their program documents to reflect the newly adopted standards depending on the institution's location within the 7 year accreditation cycle. As each set of program standards is updated, specific directions will be provided to institutions about the timeline and manner in which they must update their program and program documents. At times, relatively minor changes will be made to the standards, and the CTC may allow institutions to update their documents before the next accreditation activity. At other times, when the revised standards are significantly different from the previous standards, institutions may be required to update their documents for a review process outside of the regularly scheduled accreditation activities.

Chapter Nine
Follow-Up Activities

Introduction

Institutions' accreditation responsibilities do not end with the accreditation decision. Institutions have on-going responsibilities to attend to accreditation matters in the 7th year of the accreditation cycle. Depending on the accreditation decision, these activities can range from continuing routine accreditation activities, such as collection and analysis of candidate data, to major revisions of programs to bring them into alignment with state-adopted standards. The specific activities depend upon the issues identified by the review team and the accreditation decision rendered by the COA. Many, but not all, institutions will be required to submit a seventh year report. This Chapter describes expectations for each of the follow-up activities the institution may be required to complete during the seventh year of the cycle and, if required, beyond.

Accreditation Decisions and Institution Follow-Up Activities

As described in the previous chapter, the COA can make one of five accreditation decisions. These include the following:

- Accreditation
- Accreditation with Stipulations
- Accreditation with Major Stipulations
- Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations
- Denial of Accreditation (available only after a revisit)

The previous chapter delineated the operational implications for each of the possible accreditation decisions. The table below summarizes some, but not all, of the required activities for each of the various accreditation decisions. The previous chapter should be consulted for specific information about the definition and operational implications of each accreditation decision. Ultimately, the specific actions required of any given institution in the seventh year will be set forth in the action taken by the COA.

Table 1, below, summarizes the general expectations related to the typical seventh year of the accreditation cycle. The seventh year of the accreditation cycle is critical for achieving the purposes of accreditation (ensuring accountability, ensuring quality programs, adherence to standards, and fostering program improvement). Not only does the current system require that the institution act in a timely manner to address issues identified during the accreditation review, it assumes that all institutions will engage in on-going program improvement supported by the cycle of accreditation activities.

Institutions for which stipulations were assigned by the COA must take action to address the stipulations in one calendar year. For this reason, the activities undertaken in the seventh year are particularly critical. Institutions with *Major Stipulations* or *Probationary Stipulations* that do not sufficiently address the stipulations could be faced with *Denial of Accreditation*.

Institutional Requirement for the Seventh Year Report

The following table provides an overview of follow-up activities institutions must complete.

Table 1: Accreditation Decision and Possible Required Follow-Up Activities

Activity	**Accreditation**	**Accreditation with Stipulations**	**Accreditation with Major and Probationary Stipulations**
Report Submitted to CTC	COA discretion	Yes	Yes
Type of Report	One of two options for reporting responses to concerns as determined by COA: 1) Seventh Year Report 2) Biennial Report (due to CTC following year 1)	Seventh Year Report	Seventh Year Report
To be addressed in Report	(If required by COA) * Standards Not Met (if applicable) * Standards Met with Concerns (if applicable) Any other areas included in COA action at the time the accreditation decision is made.	* All Stipulations * Standards Not Met (if applicable) * Standards Met with Concerns (if applicable) Any other areas included in COA action at the time the accreditation decision is made.	* All Stipulations * Standards Not Met (if applicable) * Standards Met with Concerns (if applicable) Any other areas included in COA action at the time the accreditation decision is made.
Review Process	CTC staff reviews report and informs the COA whether areas to be addressed were adequately documented.	<u>If no revisit is required:</u> CTC staff reviews report and informs the COA whether areas to be addressed were adequately documented. <u>If revisit is required</u>: Revisit team reviews report	Revisit team reviews report and information collected during the revisit to make new standards findings (if appropriate) and determine whether sufficient progress has been made in addressing stipulations.

Activity	Accreditation	Accreditation with Stipulations	Accreditation with Major and Probationary Stipulations
		and information collected during the revisit to make new standards findings (if appropriate) and assesses whether progress has been made in addressing stipulations. Progress is reported to the COA, which determines whether to remove stipulations and change accreditation status.	Progress is reported to the COA, which determines whether to remove stipulations and/or change accreditation status.

All Institutions in the Seventh Year
Institutional follow-up is required of all approved institutions in the seventh year of the cycle, although a follow-up *report* is not necessarily required of all institutions (see Table 1). In the seventh year of the cycle, all institutions are expected to address issues raised during the accreditation process by the review teams and the COA. This means taking action within the policies and procedures of the institution to rectify and/or address issues related to CTC adopted standards. If an institution has no specific issues identified by the review team and all standards were found to be met, the institution personnel will continue to review candidate assessment data and available program effectiveness data with the objective of program improvement.

Accreditation
The revised *Accreditation Framework* provides the COA with the flexibility to require follow-up regardless of the accreditation decision, including *Accreditation.* The COA may require institutions with *Accreditation* to provide a follow-up report that addresses how the institution is addressing standards "not met" or "met with concerns," and the progress being made to address any other issues raised in the report or identified in the accreditation action of the COA. The COA has broad flexibility to request a follow-up report on any topic or issue identified as a standard concern in the accreditation report. The COA may require that the follow-up report be provided in a seventh year report, or be included as a separate page in the institution's next biennial report. Any follow-up required must be identified by the COA in the action taken at the time of the accreditation decision.

Accreditation with Stipulations
Any institution granted *Accreditation with Stipulations* must complete a seventh year report as part of the accreditation review process. This report should address the action taken by the institution to address any stipulations as well as concerns identified with standards "not met" or "met with concerns." In addition, the COA may require that the seventh year report address any other issue identified in the team report or raised during COA deliberations. All institutions with *Accreditation with Stipulations* must continue to work with the CTC consultant during the seventh year. In cases where the determination of *Accreditation with Stipulations* has been

rendered, the COA will indicate whether the process for removal of stipulations must include a revisit to the institution.

No Revisit Required

In the cases where a revisit was not deemed necessary by the COA, the consultant, and in some cases the team lead, will review the responses provided in the seventh year report by the institution. These responses will be summarized in an agenda item for the COA to consider in making its determination as to whether or not sufficient progress has been made to remove the stipulations. The COA will consider, at a regularly scheduled meeting, the recommendation of the CTC consultant and, if appropriate, the team lead in determining whether to remove stipulations. Institutional representatives should attend the COA meeting to ensure all questions and concerns are addressed as the members consider the removal of stipulations.

Required Revisit

If a site revisit has been deemed necessary by the COA, it will occur approximately one year after the original site visit. The institution should continue working with its CTC consultant to plan for the revisit and to ensure common understanding of what is expected at the revisit. If the COA has determined that a revisit or a focused site visit is necessary, the seventh year report will be provided to the review team in advance of the visit to help the team's assessment of the progress being made in addressing the findings of the review. The CTC consultant will work with the institution to determine the specific revisit needs as directed by the COA action and help guide the institution in determining the type of evidence and progress expected at the time of the site revisit.

Upon the conclusion of the revisit, the revisit team will determine whether the stipulations and standards deemed "not met" or "met with concerns" are now found to be met. A report of the revisit team will be provided to the COA and the COA, at one of its regularly scheduled public meetings, will discuss with the CTC consultant, team lead, and institutional representatives the institution's progress in addressing the stipulations and concerns identified in the adopted accreditation report. If it is determined that sufficient progress has been made in meeting the standards, then the COA may remove the stipulations. If sufficient progress has not been made, the COA may change the accreditation decision and/or may impose additional stipulations with new timelines and expectations for compliance with the state adopted educator preparation standards.

Accreditation with Major Stipulations

Any institution granted *Accreditation with Major Stipulations* must complete a seventh year report as part of the accreditation review process. This report should address the action taken by the institution to address any stipulations as well as concerns associated with standards found to be "not met" or "met with concerns." In addition, the COA may require that the seventh year report address any other issues identified in the team report or raised during COA deliberations. This report will be used by the revisit team, along with any information collected during the revisit, to determine the progress being made in meeting the standards.

Required Revisit
In nearly all cases of *Accreditation with Major Stipulations*, a revisit to the institution will be required. This revisit should take place approximately one year after the original site visit. The COA will indicate in its action whether the revisit will be conducted by the staff consultant and team lead, or with a team. The size of the revisit team will largely depend on the number and type of stipulations and the number and type of programs with areas of concern identified.

During the seventh year, the institution should continue working with its CTC staff consultant to plan for the revisit and to ensure common understanding of what is expected at the revisit. A seventh year report must be provided by the institution which will, in turn, be provided to the review team to help the team's assessment of the progress being made in addressing the findings of the review. The CTC consultant will work with the institution to determine the specific revisit needs as directed by the COA decision and help guide the institution in determining the type of evidence and progress expected at the time of the site visit.

Upon the conclusion of the revisit, the revisit team will determine whether the stipulations and those standards deemed "not met" or "met with concerns" are now fully met. A report of the revisit team will be provided to the COA and the COA, at one of its regularly scheduled public meetings, will discuss with the staff consultant, team lead, and institutional representatives the progress made in addressing the standards. If it is determined that sufficient progress has been made in meeting the standards, then the COA may remove the stipulations. If sufficient progress has not been made, the COA may adopt a decision of *Denial of Accreditation*. If, in some cases, it determines that some progress has been made and it is appropriate to allow additional time for the institution to address the remaining stipulations, the COA could change the accreditation decision and/or may impose additional stipulations with new timelines and expectations for compliance with the state adopted educator preparation standards.

Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations
Like *Accreditation with Stipulations* and *Accreditation with Major Stipulations*, an institution given *Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations* is required to submit a seventh year report to document how it has addressed all stipulations and concerns. However, numerous additional requirements are imposed on an institution with *Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations* during that seventh year of the cycle.

Plan to Address Stipulations
A determination of *Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations* requires that the institution submit an action plan describing the steps the institution will take to address the stipulations and concerns and providing a timeline for updates as determined by the COA. The COA determines the timeline for submitting the plan, but typically the plan must be submitted either 60 or 90 days after the COA meeting in which the COA has made the determination of *Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations.* The CTC consultant and the Administrator of Accreditation will determine the sufficiency of the plan and provide updates to the COA as appropriate.

Revisit
A revisit is required for any institution with *Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations*. This revisit should take place approximately one year after the original site visit. During the seventh

year, the institution should continue working with its CTC consultant to plan for the revisit and to ensure a common understanding of what is expected at the revisit. A seventh year report must be provided by the institution which will, in turn, be provided to the review team to help the team's assessment of the progress being made in addressing the findings of the review. The CTC consultant will work with the institution to determine the specific revisit needs as directed by the COA action and to help guide the institution in determining the types of evidence and progress expected at the time of the site visit.

The team lead, team members, and CTC consultant will participate in the revisit and provide a report to the COA about the progress that has been made in addressing standards. The report will include an updated decision on standards findings. The COA will make a determination whether sufficient progress has been made to remove the stipulations and change the accreditation decision. If the COA determines that sufficient progress has not been made, it could render a decision of *Denial of Accreditation*.

If, in some cases, it determines that some progress has been made and it is appropriate to allow additional time for the institution to address the remaining stipulations, the COA could change the accreditation decision and/or impose additional stipulations with new timelines and expectations for compliance with the state adopted educator preparation standards.

Chapter Ten:
Site Visit Team Member Information

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the responsibilities and duties of the individuals who actually conduct accreditation visits and the principles that guide the visit. Individuals selected for the Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR) will have received specialized training prior to service on an accreditation team. The information presented in this handbook is designed to reinforce that formal training and to provide other interested parties with an understanding of the responsibilities and duties of accreditation team members. This chapter provides descriptions of essential team activities that occur during the actual accreditation visit and that culminate in an accreditation recommendation, which is discussed in Chapter Eight. Chapter Eleven contains a description of the skills and techniques used by BIR team members. The audience is BIR members, educator preparation program sponsors, and other parties who are interested in institutional accreditation.

I. Purposes and Responsibilities of Accreditation Teams

Accreditation teams convene at educator preparation institutions to review the institution’s documents and to interview a variety of individuals representing stakeholders of the institution’s educator preparation programs. The purpose of the team’s work is to provide the Committee on Accreditation with sufficient information that the COA can determine whether the educator preparation program sponsors of California fulfill adopted standards for the preparation of professional educators. Accreditation teams are expected to focus on issues of quality and effectiveness across the institution (the “unit”) as well as within all credential programs. An accreditation team is expected to make its professional recommendation to the COA on the basis of the preponderance of evidence collected from multiple sources (e.g., Program Assessment Reports of Preliminary Findings, Common Standards Report, interviews across stakeholder groups, data in the biennial reports, and information from the preliminary findings of program assessment) and verified during the site visit. Site visits include off-campus programs as well as those on the main campus. To accomplish the purpose of the accreditation teams, its members will complete the following tasks:

1. Develop a preliminary perspective on the extent to which an institution and its educator preparation programs meet the Common and program standards by reviewing: a) the institution's Common Standards Report (CSR); b) the institution’s Biennial Reports and the CTC staff’s responses, and c) the Program Assessment Preliminary Reports of Findings (Preliminary Report) and Program Summaries.

2. Collect additional information to confirm or disconfirm the preliminary perspective by: a) interviewing credential candidates, program completers, employers of program completers, field experience supervisors, program faculty, administrators, and other key stakeholders; and b) reviewing materials, such as course syllabi, student records, and reports of follow-up studies and needs analyses, as well as any other pertinent sources of information available.

3. Develop consensus decisions on whether the institution's education unit meets the Common Standards and whether each educator preparation program meets the appropriate program standards.

4. Develop a consensus accreditation recommendation with supporting documentation to submit to the COA. The recommendation must be one of the following: "Accreditation," "Accreditation with Stipulations," "Accreditation with Major Stipulations," or "Accreditation with Probationary Stipulations" for the institution and all its credential programs. An accreditation team may recommend Denial of Accreditation only if an institution has failed to make sufficient progress in addressing deficiencies identified by the COA in a previous accreditation decision.

II. Responsibilities of Accreditation Team Members

During the accreditation site visit, team members represent the COA rather than their own institutions. As such, team members should identify themselves as a member of the Accreditation Team when introducing themselves to an institution's constituencies. In addition, effective and rewarding accreditation site visits occur when team members focus exclusively on tasks required for the visit and are fully committed to providing an impartial and comprehensive review of an institution and its programs. In keeping with this, team members are not permitted to schedule any professional or personal activities during the team visit.

Team members will be assigned to focus on the unit (e.g., one or more of the Common Standards) or on three to four educator preparation programs by the team lead or the CTC Administrator of Accreditation. If the institution has many programs, the team lead may designate a "cluster" leader who will support the work of the "cluster" of team members assigned to review programs. In general, team members will be assigned to review either the unit, teacher preparation programs (e.g., multiple subject, single subject, education specialist, adult education, etc.) or services programs (e.g., education administration, pupil personnel services, etc.). Team members are expected to focus on interviews and documents that are relevant to their assigned standards or programs. As the visit progresses, team members will share what they are learning about their assignments with the rest of the accreditation team. Accreditation teams work on a consensus basis. Team members are expected to participate throughout the visit in that spirit.

Team members fulfill their responsibilities by participating in the following activities:

- Reviewing all documentation prior to the visit;
- Participating in all team meetings;
- Conducting all scheduled interviews; and
- Reviewing supporting documentation available only at the institution.

III. Roles of Accreditation Team Members

Team Lead

The role of a team lead during an accreditation visit is complex and challenging. The team lead helps team members make full use of their interview and document review time; conducts the pre-visit planning meetings, the Mid-visit Status Report meeting, and the final team report presentation; and leads all deliberations and writing tasks of the team. Additionally, the team lead serves as the representative of the COA, conducts interviews, and participates in other key activities of the visit.

To function effectively as a team lead, an individual must be completely familiar with the CTC's Common Standards and the current CTC procedures for accreditation visits. In addition, the lead must be knowledgeable about facilitating group work and handling complex decision-making. The overall effectiveness of the accreditation process and the value it has for California institutions depends, in part, on the preparations and professionalism brought by the team lead to this critical task. Information related to the specific roles and tasks for the team lead can be found in Chapter Eleven.

Team Members

Team members are assigned to credential areas about which they have knowledge and experience. Team members are charged with the task of reviewing the education unit or its programs and of determining the extent to which the institution and its programs are aligned with the Common and program standards. Team members are expected to conduct all assigned interviews, review all documents appropriate to their assignments, familiarize themselves with any additional supporting documentation, and participate fully in all team meetings. They participate in deliberations about the quality of the institution's response to the Common and program standards and reach consensus on 1) whether there is sufficient evidence to find that each Common or program standard is "Met," 2) whether there is sufficient evidence to find that a standard is "Met with Concerns" or "Not Met" and how the institution's response to that standard or element of that standard is inadequate, 3) an accreditation recommendation to the COA for the institution and all of its credential programs, and 4) any stipulations. As part of the review and reporting process, all team members have writing responsibilities during the visit.

IV. Role of Commission Staff

The CTC consultant's role begins before the site visit. The CTC consultant will typically work with an institution for about a year prior to the site visit. The focus of this work is on the logistics and preparation for the visit. The consultant likely has fielded questions from the institution about the meaning and intent of standards, state credential requirements, and various implementation issues. The CTC consultant works closely with the institution on the overall visit schedule, the development of the interview schedule, and general logistics to ensure that the accreditation review team has what it needs to carry out its responsibilities once on site.

Once at the site, it is the CTC consultant's job to ensure the integrity of the accreditation process during the site visit. The consultant, with the team lead, will interact with the institution's accreditation coordinator beginning on the first day of the visit and throughout the entire visit. The consultant works to ensure that the reviewers conduct their visit under the auspices of the *Accreditation Framework*, and the standards, procedures and protocols established by the COA. The consultant serves to assist the accreditation review team by providing information and assistance to the reviewers as necessary. In particular, it is critical that the consultant keep lines of communication open between the reviewers and the institution – ensuring that the institution has every opportunity to provide reviewers with information the reviewers need to make informed decisions. The consultant helps the team in its deliberations as well as in editing and reviewing the report.

Finally the CTC consultant, in collaboration with the team lead, has responsibility for presenting the report to the COA and ensuring that the COA has accurate and timely information about the review to make its accreditation decision.

V. Conflict of Interest, Professional Behavior, and Ethical Guidelines

Conflict of Interest

The COA will not appoint a team member to an accreditation team if that person has had any official prior relationship with the institution. Such relationships can include, but are not limited to, employment, application for employment, enrollment, application for admission, or any of these involving a spouse or family member. Moreover, team members have a responsibility to acknowledge any reason that would make it difficult for them to render a fair, impartial, and professional judgment. If a potential team member is uncertain whether a conflict of interest exists, it is that individual's responsibility to alert the CTC consultant about the relationship so that a determination can be made. This avoids embarrassment and the possibility that a team's findings will be vacated.

The list of potential team members is sent to the institution prior to the visit. If the institution believes one or more team members may have a conflict of interest, the Administrator of Accreditation will be notified as soon as possible. The Director of the Professional Services Division of the CTC will not assign a CTC consultant to an institution if the consultant has been employed by that institution, applied for employment to that institution, been an enrolled student at the institution, or otherwise had a prior relationship that would adversely affect the visit. Finally, members of the COA are required to recuse themselves from any decisions affecting institutions with which they have potential conflicts of interest.

Professional Behavior

Team members are expected to act professionally at all times. Intemperate language, accusatory questions, hostile behavior, or other actions or deeds that would compromise the professional nature of the accreditation process are not permitted. Any such conduct will bring a reprimand from the team lead and possible disqualification from the BIR. As representatives of the COA, team members and the CTC consultant are expected to comport themselves with dignity, cordiality, and politeness at all times. Institutions will evaluate the performance and conduct of all team members and the evaluation will be considered in the determination of which individuals continue as members of the BIR.

Ethical Guidelines

The COA requires all team members to adhere to the highest standard of ethics while performing any accreditation-related activity. Interviews are to be held in strict confidence. Team sessions are also confidential and are not to be shared with non-team members. The presentation of the Team Report at the Exit Meeting is public and open. The meetings of the COA must follow all public meeting laws.

VI. Preparation for an Accreditation Visit

Being Assigned to a Team

The Administrator of Accreditation is responsible for developing the accreditation site teams. All team members must be trained BIR members who are free of all conflicts of interest (see above). BIR members are annually asked to identify dates during which they are available to participate in an accreditation site visit. Teams are usually created about six months before each site visit is scheduled to occur; team members will learn about their scheduled visit immediately afterward.

Travel Plans

Team members will receive instructions from the CTC consultant regarding their travel plans. Team members should make travel arrangements immediately upon receipt of the instructions, following the guidelines on arrival and departure.

Review Materials

The consultant should contact all team members to ensure they have received all materials and to determine if they have any questions about the visit. Team members should contact their consultant if they have questions or do not receive their materials 45 days prior to the scheduled visit.

Clothing

Team members should dress in a professional manner while performing accreditation duties in public. Team members should also bring comfortable and casual clothes for evening team meetings at the hotel and to take advantage of fitness equipment that is available in most hotels.

Telephone Use and Internet Access

Although personal and professional telephone calls should be kept to an absolute minimum, team members should leave the hotel telephone number and the campus telephone number so they can be contacted in an emergency. On most accreditation visits, wireless connectivity will be available at both the institution and the hotel. Team members may bring a laptop to the visit.

Special Needs

If a team member has allergies, specific housing needs, dietary restrictions, or other special needs, the CTC consultant should be contacted as soon as possible so appropriate arrangements can be made.

Participate in All Team Meetings

Members of the accreditation team are expected to arrange their travel so as to arrive at the team's hotel in time for all team meetings. Throughout the duration of the visit, team members are expected to travel together, dine together, and be available for all required meetings. Team members should plan to work every evening. Finally, team members must not leave the host campus prior to the presentation of the team's report, without prior arrangement with the CTC consultant.

Conduct All Assigned Interviews

Team members will be assigned to a series of interviews by the team lead. Team members should review the interview schedule and may request adjustments based on that review. Any changes in the schedule must be facilitated by the team lead and the CTC consultant. The institution being accredited has gone to substantial effort to produce the requisite number of interviewees, and team members must respect that effort by conducting the interviews as scheduled, if possible. Any unusual events or problems regarding the interviews should be discussed with the team lead or the CTC consultant.

Review Appropriate Supporting Documentation

Team members will be assigned time in the document room to research issues that were identified in the Program Assessment Preliminary Report of findings, through the team's review of the documents, or that arose during interviews. All supporting documentation is the property of the institution and may not be removed from the campus by team members. Since the accreditation process calls for a recommendation based on a balanced review of all available information, team members should ensure that they are as familiar with the supporting documentation as they are with the interview data.

Participate in all Team Deliberations and Report Writing

Site teams are expected to use a consensus model in making decisions and teams that strive to be mutually supportive during deliberations arrive at consensus more readily. Respecting the viewpoint of all members and focusing the discussion on evidence about the institution and its programs facilitates making a decision that reflects a holistic assessment of the evidence. Writing the report is the shared responsibility of the entire team. The team lead will assign writing tasks which may begin as early as the first full day of the visit. It is every team member's responsibility to stay in the team room until, either the report is finished, or the team lead and CTC consultant indicate that members may return to their rooms.

VIII. Collecting and Analyzing Data

The accreditation team is limited to interview data collected during the visit and documentary evidence supplied by the institution or the CTC. Team members may not collect data from other sources or use anecdotal information collected outside of the visit. All team members are required to keep a detailed record of all interviews conducted, materials reviewed, and the findings that result from the process. All information from the interviews is considered private and confidential. Any data or quotes used by the team will be reported anonymously or in the aggregate. All team member notes taken during the interviews or during document reviews are the property of the COA and are collected by the CTC consultant at the end of the accreditation visit. These materials will be retained by the consultant for one calendar year after the visit. Similarly, all materials placed in the documents room or electronic exhibits remain the property of the institution.

Institutions are encouraged to utilize technology (e.g., phone, video conferencing) if necessary to ensure that an adequate number of individuals representing each group can be interviewed. Similarly, the CTC encourages institutions to utilize electronic documents (e.g., CD-ROM or an internet website) that can be easily accessed by the visiting team members. BIR members are expected to be flexible as institutions make the transition to electronic media and communications.

Reading and Analyzing Documents

The initial data collection task is completed during the Program Assessment process. This process, which is described in more detail in Chapter Six, occurs in the fourth year of the accreditation cycle. During Program Assessment, trained BIR members read and analyze all program documents submitted by each institution. The outcome of a Program Assessment is a Preliminary Report of Findings and a Program Summary. These documents identify preliminary areas of concern and provide site team members with a summary, in the institution’s own words, of each of its programs.

Forty-five to sixty days before the visit, each team member will receive various documents about the institution’s education unit and its educator preparation programs. Some of the information will come directly from the institution. Some types of information will come from the CTC and will reflect the preliminary findings of BIR members who reviewed the institution’s program documents during the Program Assessment process (see Chapter Six). The documents are likely to arrive in electronic form and must be reviewed prior to the visit. This is important because one of the team’s first tasks will be to share concerns that were identified by team members as they prepared for the visit. Being prepared allows all team members to help collect information pertinent to any concerns identified and allows the reviewer more time at the site to focus on interviews and evidence available only at the site.

Develop Initial Questions

Team members should read their documents carefully, making notations where they have questions or concerns or require clarification. Team members should begin to write interview questions based on documents appropriate to their assignments (e.g., the *CSR* or Preliminary Reports). The Preliminary Reports will identify areas of concern identified by the Program Assessment reviewers, if any. These areas of concern may suggest interview questions or documents to review.

Read the Common Standards Report (CSR)

The *CSR* will be provided electronically and, if requested by a team member, in paper copy. In responding to each Common Standard, the CSR should clearly state how the institution implements each standard and the quality of the institution’s implementation, and should provide evidence of the institution’s actions. Typically, the *CSR* includes, but is not limited to, the following components:

- Letter of Transmittal by Dean;
- Background of Institution and its Mission and Goals;
- Education Unit Mission and Goals;
- Significant Changes in Education Programs since the last visit (This section should include the findings of the previous COA accreditation team visit.);

- Institutional Response to the Common Standards; and
- Links or references to evidence available electronically.

Read Assigned Program Documents
Each member of the review team will review all documents, in their assigned areas, that were already submitted to the CTC by the institution and that was generated by the Program Assessment reviewers. This includes the following:

- The Preliminary Report prepared by the Program Assessment Review Team;
- The Program Summary prepared by the Program Assessment Review Team;
- The Program Design section of the program narrative;
- Biennial Reports for years one, three, and five; and
- Commission Feedback to the Biennial Report.

Interview Techniques
A critical method of obtaining sufficient data to make a determination of institutional and program quality and effectiveness is through interviewing many people with direct knowledge of the institution or program. Sufficient numbers of people from all the major constituencies related to the institution or program (faculty and administration from the institution, students in the programs, cooperating master teachers and school administrators, graduates of the programs and their employers, and advisory groups to the programs) must be interviewed carefully about their experiences with the institution and its programs in relation to the selected standards of quality. In order to maximize valuable interview time, the institution will schedule interviews with like stakeholders from the different programs team members are reviewing. For instance, a reviewer focusing on teaching programs may interview candidates from the multiple subject, single subject, and adult education programs. At another time, that reviewer will interview district-employed supervisors from across programs. Some interviews will continue to be scheduled with individuals (e.g., department chairperson).

Accreditation review interviews are usually semi-structured. There is not sufficient time for a true, open-ended interview and the groups will vary enough in background and knowledge level that a structured interview is not appropriate. Reviewers should have some prepared questions in mind based on team discussions and the constituency of the person/people being interviewed. Depending on the initial responses, follow-up questions may vary significantly.

IX. Making Decisions about Standards

As team members complete the interview schedule, examine all available documents, and amass as much information as possible, the complex process of making sense out of the data and arriving at defensible decisions about each standard is occurring. The overall determination and recommendation of the team is contained in the final team report, which is written after the team has discussed all the standards. The team will discuss each standard and make a consensus determination using one of three available categories: “Met,” “Met with Concerns,” or “Not Met.” It is critical that the team’s assessment relies exclusively on evidence that was accumulated through the site visit and not on anything else. The fact that the team has evidence from a number of different constituencies (students, faculty, supervising teachers, employers, program completers, and documents) is important in making the final decision. If the team decides that a standard is “Not Met” or is “Met with Concerns,” the team must document the basis for that judgment.

While the COA has developed statements about what constitutes a Standard as “Met”, ”Met with Concerns,” and “Not Met,” it is the professional judgment of the team members that will determine which category the collected data best fits.

Standards Findings
For each standard the team will make one of three decisions:

> **Standard Met**
> All phrases of the standard are evident and effectively implemented.
>
> **Standard Met with Concerns**
> One or more phrases of the standard are not evident or are ineffectively implemented.
>
> **Standard Not Met**
> Significant phrases of the standard are not evident or are so ineffectively implemented that it is not possible to see the standard in the program.

In all cases where a standard is “Met with Concerns” or “Not Met,” the team will provide specific information about the rationale for its judgment **and how the institution was deficient in meeting the standard.**

X. Writing the Team Report

The report should be written with this purpose in mind: to inform the COA about the extent to which an institution and its educator preparation programs satisfy applicable standards and to support the COA in rendering an accreditation decision. Basic declarative prose utilizing simple sentences, active verbs, and clearly defined subjects will result in a valuable report. Findings should be supported by evidence collected by the team during the visit. The report should contain specific comments about the group's judgments of program quality, strengths or deficiencies, and suggestions for improvement. The team lead will edit the final draft of all report sections for clarity, smoothness, and uniformity.

Chapter Eight provides guidance to teams about how to determine whether the standards findings suggest a recommendation for “Accreditation,” “Accreditation with Stipulations,” “Accreditation with Major Stipulations,” or “Denial of Accreditation.”

X. Concluding the Visit

When the report is finished and ready for presentation, team members should prepare to return home. Prior to departure, team members must complete expense forms and evaluation forms. The expense form allows the state to reimburse the team members for out-of-pocket expenses associated with the site visit. The evaluation form is part of the accreditation system’s on-going improvement process as described in Chapter Thirteen. The CTC consultant will collect interview notes and any other documentation that was generated during the site visit.

The CTC follows state administrative guidelines for reimbursing individuals. As required by different team members, the CTC will purchase airline tickets or reimburse for mileage at state rates. The agency will directly pay the hotel bill. In addition, the CTC will pay *per diem* expenses for meals and incidentals in accordance with state policy. The consultant assigned to the accreditation team is responsible to review details with the team. Any expenses beyond those specified in state regulations will not be covered. If a team member’s district requires a substitute during the site visit, the CTC will pay for that substitute when billed by the district.

Concluding Activities and Team Report

The presentation of the team report is typically held during the late morning or early afternoon of the last day of the team visit. The team report is duplicated for each team member, and for program faculty and administration members as determined by the Dean or Director. If possible, time will be allotted so that the institution’s administration can read the team report prior to the meeting. The format of this meeting is an oral presentation of the team report by the team lead. Typically, the team lead summarizes the report and discusses the rationale for the accreditation recommendation. On occasion, the team lead may invite comments from team members. This is not a time for the institution to debate the recommendation, submit new data, or discuss the team's judgment.

In the case of a merged NCATE/COA visit, the institution’s Dean or Director determines whether team findings that apply to NCATE standards will be shared with the entire faculty of the institution. The NCATE report is prepared and submitted to the Unit Accreditation Board in accordance with NCATE policy. The institution prepares its rejoinder as described in NCATE policy. The decision of the NCATE Unit Accreditation Board will be made separately from the decision of the COA. Merged visits are discussed in Chapter Twelve.

The accreditation team report may be edited for publication in the COA agenda, but its substance will not be changed. The report will be posted on the CTC website as part of the COA agenda. The final copy of the report, as it will appear when presented to the COA for its review and final decision, will be sent to the institution and team lead prior to the date of the COA meeting.

Evaluation of Accreditation Process and Personnel

The CTC provides team members with an evaluation instrument that covers all aspects of the visit, ranging from the initial contact through the report presentation. The instrument contains both multiple-choice and open-ended questions, and requests recommendations for improving the accreditation process. To assist in the quality of the BIR, the Dean or Director also receives forms for evaluating each member of the accreditation team. These data will be considered by the Executive Director of the CTC when decisions are made regarding retention of individuals on the BIR and identification of individuals able to assume the role of cluster leader and/or team lead. If the institution has concerns about the performance of the CTC consultant, the Director of the Professional Services Division of the CTC should be contacted.

Final Note

The accreditation team's responsibilities and workload may seem overwhelming when put into print, but the collective experiences of hundreds of professional educators suggests that participation in a COA accreditation visit is a tremendously valuable professional development activity. Working with fellow educators on a matter of signal importance that will improve the profession is a marvelous way to spend several days. The team approach provides both camaraderie and support as the team makes its decisions. The CTC consultant will be on hand to provide additional assistance. Team members expand their knowledge, make new friends, and return to their regular post invigorated by the experience.

Chapter Eleven:
Board of Institutional Review Member Skills and Competencies

Introduction

This chapter describes the knowledge and skills of members of the Board of Institutional Review (BIR). BIR members complete activities that are central to the quality and success of the educator preparation accreditation system in California. The BIR is a large group of K-12 and higher education educators, administrators and policy setters who were trained and are assigned to work in pairs or small groups to review documents, interview stakeholders, and develop consensus decisions on the quality of educator preparation programs. This chapter would be of interest to individuals who are interested in joining the BIR, previously trained BIR members who wish to refresh their skills, and other parties interested in the accreditation process.

I. Selection of Team Members

Team members are selected for membership in the Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR) based on the recommendation of a colleague, the team members' knowledge of the Accreditation Framework, and demonstration of the skills necessary for a successful accreditation visit. During the BIR training, prospective members participate in activities designed to develop the skills required during a site visit and to provide feedback to CTC staff on the skill level of the prospective members. BIR members assigned to a site visit are expected to utilize the following skills during the visit and, if necessary, to request assistance or guidance from the team lead and/or the CTC consultant. Qualifications of a prospective BIR member include**:**

- At least three years of professional experience in education;
- Experience with qualitative evaluations;
- Experience with multiple levels and different sets of education related standards;
- Personal characteristics including integrity, objectivity, empathy, ability to work under pressure, organizational ability, time management, and being a team player;
- Experience with collaboration in writing and problem solving;
- Good communication skills (both oral and written);
- Experience with data collection and analysis;
- Familiarity with technology, including the use of both MAC and PC platforms; and
- Ability to access electronic information, search for pertinent information, and appropriately cite the source for inclusion in the team report.

II. BIR Member Responsibilities

BIR members' primary responsibilities are to review and analyze written documentation developed by educator preparation institutions, examine source documents referenced in the written documentation, interview stakeholders who are knowledgeable about specific educator preparation programs at institutions under review, and determine the extent to which an education unit or its programs are aligned to adopted state standards. With regard to document reviews, BIR members may be assigned to work in pairs to complete an initial program review (please see Chapter Three) or a Program Assessment review (Chapter Six). Alternatively, a BIR member may be assigned as part of a three to eight member team to complete an accreditation site visit. (Chapter Ten describes the logistics and organizational requirements of an accreditation site visit.) Site visits utilize the full array of BIR member skills, including document review, analyses of reference documents, interview skills, and the capacity to participate in team meetings during which every member contributes their concerns, shares new information, and cooperates to develop a set of consensus decisions reflecting the teams' best professional judgment.

Initial or Revised Program Document Reviews

This kind of review occurs throughout the year and can be performed wherever the reviewers agree to meet or remotely, via e-mail. The outcome of initial program review is a set of responses for each program standard. The reviewers must agree whether there is sufficient evidence contained in the documents to find that each program standard is met. If not, the reviewers must identify the nature of the information that is not addressed or is not documented. Institutions have the option of revising their program proposal and resubmitting the documents. The same pair of reviewers will review the revisions and determine whether each standard has been satisfied. This process repeats until all current program standards are met. This process results in an agenda item for the Committee on Accreditation (COA) seeking approval for the proposed program. For more information on the initial approval of programs, please see Chapter Three.

Program Assessment Reviews

BIR members are also instrumental in the Program Assessment process (Chapter Six) which occurs in the 4th year of the accreditation cycle. These reviews occur primarily in the winter and spring, are performed at the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) office, and provide valuable preliminary information to an institution about whether any of its programs may not be aligned to standards. Performing this review requires reading, and analyzing program narratives, course syllabi, and other supporting documentation. When both members have completed their independent reviews, they must discuss their findings and agree whether each program standard is preliminary met or, if not, what additional information is needed. The pair will develop the Program Assessment Preliminary Report of Findings (Findings) that reflects the result of their deliberations. They will also develop a Program Summary of statements from the program documents describing the design, curriculum, fieldwork, and candidate assessment processes for the program they reviewed. The Findings is sent to the institution, which has the option of revising its documents and resubmitting them for another review. Once all program standards are preliminary met, or the date of the accreditation site visit is too soon, the Program Assessment process ends.

Accreditation Site Visits

BIR members participate in accreditation site visits that usually occur in the spring and that run from Sunday through Wednesday at noon. These visits are the heart of the accreditation system and require highly trained, ethical, and experienced professionals to function as members of the review team. Prior to the visits, the team members will receive (and must review) the Findings and Program Summary for every assigned program, Common Standards Reports (CSR), Biennial Reports for years one, three, and five and CTC staff comments about the Biennial Reports (see Chapter Five). Soon after the team convenes at the site, team members will share their concerns and share their understandings of each program at the institution and about the institution's education unit. Throughout the site visit, every team member will be utilizing document review, interview, writing, analytical, and communication skills to ensure that the institution receives a fair, impartial, and thorough review of its programs and its overall functioning.

III. BIR Member Skills

In order to effectively and efficiently complete the responsibilities identified above, every BIR member must be skilled to complete a variety of critical functions. Each of the core skills is identified and defined in the section below.

Reading and Analyzing Documents

The initial data collection task that faces team members in all of their assignments is reading and analyzing documents. Below are some techniques that may assist this critical, but often arduous task.

Ensure that the Institution is Meeting each Standard by Identifying the Who, What, When, and Where of each Standard

In assuring that the institution or program meets the relevant standards, it is important for the reviewers to identify the roles of the people who initiate, complete, or verify required activities. Doing so allows the reviewers to ensure the right people are being interviewed and that the correct questions are being asked. Once the key players have been identified, it is important to identify whether each individual actually performs the activities described by the institution or program in its self-study report. If a standard is "Met" through a specific activity, a description of that activity should be noted in the self-study report so that the team can verify that statement later. Additionally, the "when and where" questions should be posed and answers noted from the self-study report if such issues are important to assuring that a particular standard is"Met".

Determine Relationships

It can be helpful to draw a rough chart or graph of the program or institution in terms of professional relationships and duties as identified in the various documents. Finding or creating an organizational chart can be helpful in learning how the institution or program is organized and operated.

Note Key Forms

Most programs operate using a system of forms or documents that show candidate progress through the program or institution, verify a candidate's demonstration of knowledge or skills, and record that other legal or required steps are completed (e.g., Certificate of Clearance). Becoming familiar with those forms and seeking them out once on campus can provide high-value data in a short time.

Look for Formulas

Many institutions operate under formulas, which determine such things as class size, supervisory ratios, admissions, and other standard operations. Finding these in the self-study report and checking on them once on campus can be helpful.

Note Generalizations and Other Vague Language

Responses to the standards should be clear and concise. The response should address "how" an institution meets a standard. It is important to follow up on language that is unclear or statements that make claims that seem to be unsupported. It may merely be unclear language; it can also point to possible areas of weakness.

Verify Claims

If an institution makes a claim in its documents, the institution must be able to verify that claim through documentation or interviews. For example, if an institution claims that it has established a close working relationship with three local school districts, team members must verify this relationship by interviewing administrators from the districts and reviewing MOUs or advisory board records. Evidence noted in the reports should be available for the team to review. If claims are made without supporting documentation, the team lead and consultant should be informed so they can include that information in the mid-visit report. Many reports make reference to specific documents and forms; the team lead and consultant must be certain that a team member has checked that these claims are accurate.

Follow Hunches and Look for Evidence to Confirm

Most team members have a great deal of experience with educational institutions and have excellent insight about how institutions function. While these perceptions alone are not evidence, teams should not ignore them during the data collection phase or even when making judgments. Insights can lead to confirming interviews and can help to sharpen the entire process.

Respect Institutional Mission and Goals

Institutions and their programs are permitted to meet adopted standards in their own ways. There is not one best way of preparing educators. The team's task is to ensure that the institution or program is meeting the standards it claims it is meeting and that the institution or program is providing a quality educational experience. The exact means to this common end will, and should, vary. It may not be to team members' taste, but such variances are perfectly permissible.

Review Documents Thoroughly

Sometimes, documents look well prepared because they are fancy or reflect high quality presentation skills. The team's task is to look beyond the presentation and examine the content. Lots of "bells and whistles" do not always reflect high quality. Likewise, documents that are poorly presented may not accurately reflect the quality of the work going on at the institution. While the CTC encourages institutions to prepare high quality documents, when presented with a weak document, the reviewer may need to communicate more frequently with the team lead and CTC consultant to ensure the reviewer has sufficient information to make an informed decision about how well the standards are being addressed.

Investigate Omissions

In some cases, omissions in a report can reveal a great deal about the institution or program. As documents are being reviewed, team members should ask themselves, "What is not being presented?" "What is in the background?" Familiarity with the credential area can be a great help here. Noted omissions should not lead to assumptions about institutional or program quality, but they may help focus further examination and help pose some questions.

Follow the Candidate
Try to understand what the program looks like from the perspective of a candidate entering it. What activities, what documents, what experiences are provided to the candidate or asked of the candidate? Once evidence is gathered, the team should put it all together to see whether the entire process makes sense - from admission, through coursework and fieldwork, to program completion - for a hypothetical candidate. This process might help the team identify gaps in the information presented, or it may help rectify or confirm contrary pieces of information gathered from other sources.

Interview Techniques
A critical method of obtaining sufficient data to make a determination of institutional and program quality and effectiveness is through interviewing many people with direct knowledge of the institution or program. Sufficient numbers of people from all the major constituencies related to the institution or program (faculty and administration from the institution, students in the programs, cooperating master teachers and school administrators, graduates of the programs and their employers, and advisory groups to the programs) must be interviewed carefully about their experiences with the institution and its programs in relation to the selected standards of quality. In order to maximize valuable interview time, the institution will schedule interviews with like stakeholders from the different programs team members are reviewing. For instance, a reviewer focusing on teaching programs may interview candidates from the multiple subject, single subject, and adult education programs. At another time, that reviewer will interview district-employed supervisors from across programs. Some interviews will continue to be scheduled with individuals (e.g., department chairperson).

The information that follows is intended to help team members improve their interviewing skills and complete the review task effectively. Remember, an interview is simply a "purposeful conversation with two or more people directed by one in order to get information."

Accreditation review interviews are usually semi-structured. There is not sufficient time for a true, open-ended interview and the groups will vary enough in background and knowledge level that a structured interview is not appropriate. Reviewers should have some prepared questions in mind based on team discussions and the constituency of the person/people being interviewed. Depending on the initial responses, follow-up questions may vary significantly.

Introduction
The interview begins with introductions that include the team member’s name and identifies the team member as a member of the Accreditation Team for the CTC. During the site visit, team members are not representing their own institutions, so it is not appropriate to identify those affiliations. Depending on who is being interviewed (candidates in particular), it may be necessary to provide a brief explanation of accreditation. Make sure not to make it sound like a punitive or a “gotcha” process, but rather a regular review process to ensure quality and to make recommendations for improvement, if necessary.

Explain Why You Are Interviewing Each Person
Explain the purpose of the interview and the types of questions that will be asked (the questions may vary somewhat depending on the constituency being interviewed). For instance, when

interviewing master teachers, the explanation might be, "I am here to ask you some questions about the preparation of student teachers you have worked with from _______ Institution."

Reduce Anxiety
Some individuals will be anxious and a few may be reluctant to say much. Team members should be gracious and ease into the questions by asking some general questions.

Assure Confidentiality
Team members must be certain to inform interviewees that any information shared will be kept strictly confidential and that only aggregate data will be reported to the institution. This is particularly important with candidates in the program and, often, with program faculty.

Maintain a Professional Perspective
Team members must use their skills and experiences to focus directly on gathering and analyzing data to determine how well the program meets the particular standards or guidelines. They must be as objective as possible at all times and should avoid making comparisons between their institutions and the institution under review as such comments may be interpreted as demonstrating bias, even if unintended.

Confirm Understanding
It is important that reviewers confirm that they have heard and correctly understood comments made by interviewees. The interviewer can do this by paraphrasing back to the interviewee the main idea contained in the interviewee’s comment. This practice encourages the interviewees to clarify something the interviewer had not understood correctly and to elaborate on their previous response.

Take Notes
Team members must make careful notes. This becomes particularly important when conflicting responses are received by several team members. Reviewers frequently consult their notes during the deliberations because by then, the reviewer has conducted numerous interviews and met numerous people over the course of several days at the institution, and they need to make sure they are reporting their findings accurately and completely. Document the number of responses on a specific item to identify patterns of evidence on a particular standard.

Ask Questions Related to Standards
It is important to ask questions that will help the team determine whether specific standards are “Met”. Team members may use program planning prompts of the standards as a basis for their questions. They should focus their questions on standards the interviewee is likely to know about. For example, questions about candidate competence are most appropriate for supervising teachers or graduates of the program and their employers, while the program administrator should be a primary respondent to questions on program design.

Avoid Questions That Can Be Answered "Yes" or "No"
Some simple factual questions may need to be asked. However, Yes/No type questions generally receive a one-word response. To the extent possible, word questions in a way that invites

respondents to describe their experience with the issue being reviewed. For example, an interviewer could ask candidates, “How did you arrange for a field/clinical placement?”

Pursue Questions Until They Are Answered
Reviewers must listen to the answer and decide whether they are satisfied with the response. If not, they must pursue the matter further. Some answers will require an elaboration or need clarification. Reviewers should ask for specific examples of incidents or situations. Follow-up questions should focus on clarifying, amplifying, or verifying initial responses. Remember that not all interviews will yield the same amount of information. Some people do have more knowledge of an institution or its programs than others.

Do Not Accept Unsupported Conclusions
Be sure that sufficient information is gathered to substantiate any conclusions. Lines of evidence are critical and should be referenced and substantiated in the team report.

Be Aware of Time - Adhere to a Time Schedule
It is up to each team member to control the time allotted for interviews. Interviews with individuals are generally scheduled for 20 minutes while those with groups are generally scheduled for 45 minutes. Try to keep the interviews within the allotted time frame. It is important that all team members honor the schedule prepared by the institution. It usually represents many hours of work and many individuals have made special arrangements to be present and interviewed. If there is a need to eliminate or rearrange some interviews, be sure to discuss this with the team lead and the consultant. Under no circumstances may a team member unilaterally cancel an interview. In all cases, the cancellation of interviews needs to be done with caution and after discussion with the team lead and CTC consultant.

Ask a Wrap-up Question
Most interviewees will have thought about this interview in advance and may have issues they want to mention. Invite them to do so at the end of the interview to ensure they have provided all the information they can.

Cross-Check Information
It is necessary to get information from a variety of sources, such as master teachers, public school administrators, student teaching supervisors, student teachers and graduates, and employers of graduates and then cross-check the validity of the information. This is part of the triangulation strategy discussed below.

Relate Interpretative Comments to Specific Standards
Answers are often interpretative rather than factual. Verify that the answer relates to specific program standards. Avoid accepting hearsay statements or comments that are overly vague. Remember that some interviewees will have "axes to grind." Do not allow individuals with personal issues to consume valuable reviewer time. While it might be difficult during a site visit to distinguish between those with “axes to grind” and those with legitimate concerns about a program, a reviewer must consider individual comments during an interview session in context with the totality of the evidence he or she is reviewing and with information reported by other team members.

Use Stimulated Recall

A good technique for improving responses is to provide a context within a program that interviewees are familiar with and ask questions related to that context. For example, use the program's handbook with interviewees and ask questions related to its contents. Another example is to ask the person to remember a particular time in the program (e.g., beginning clinical practice) to sharpen their responses and enable them to be specific about how the program works.

Ensure Adequate Representation from All Programs

Interviewing groups can present particular challenges not found in interviews with individuals. One challenge is ensuring that representatives from every program have the opportunity to respond to questions on every issue of importance. One method for dealing with interviewees who are dominating the group interview is to acknowledge their contribution and invite others to respond to the same prompt. For example: "I just heard about some single subject candidates' experiences in finding student teaching positions. What is the experience like for candidates in other programs?" Another method is to invite quiet individuals to speak. The interviewer might say: "I've heard from field supervisors in education administration and school nursing but haven't heard anything from field supervisors in counseling. Can you please tell me what your experiences have been like working with school counseling candidates?"

Considerations for Decision Making

No one individual is expected to collect and analyze data for every piece of the puzzle. Members should ask each other what they saw, heard, and read. Are they hearing the same general things? Did someone obtain information that is valuable to another member's area of responsibility? In most cases, team members can either confirm they are seeing and hearing similar things about a program or they can provide information to fill in the blanks where other members are lacking information.

Look for Patterns/Themes

By the mid-point of the site visit, team members will have listened to numerous interviews, reviewed many documents, and talked with other team members about their interviews and document notes. They will probably have identified some possible patterns or themes. The team lead will provide opportunities for members to describe what they're thinking. Other members can provide supporting or disconfirming evidence. Questions like these can help identify patterns: "What were the most common problems mentioned?" "What phrases or words were used across most interviews?"

Cluster Responses by Constituency or by Standard.

As team members review information obtained from each constituency, the reviewers should ask whether common concerns, strengths, or weaknesses were identified. The reviewer might rank the concerns, strengths, or weaknesses by the frequency of responses to get a measure of the "weight" of such issues. Alternatively, they might want to look at each standard to see how responses cluster.

Use Metaphorical/Analogical Thinking
Some people find creating metaphors to be a useful way to bring general impressions into focus. This should be done only when most of the evidence has been reviewed so as not to cloud later data collection. A possible example is:

"If I had two words to describe this institution's attention to Standards 2 and 9, they would be ___________ and __________."

Talking about metaphors that describe an institution's program can help team members' thoughts coalesce. Although all metaphors are false at some level of analysis, their use can help crystallize team members' sense of a program or standard.

Build a Logical Chain of Evidence
Team members often find that individuals from different programs independently report similar concerns or problems. The challenge to the team is to determine whether the issues reflect program findings or whether they reflect an institution-wide problem that should be registered as a Common Standard finding.

For example, at one institution, candidates, program completers, and master teachers representing multiple programs reported during interviews that candidates were often confused about what should be happening during field experiences and clinical practice. One team member verified those claims through a review of the course syllabi, which failed to reveal any evidence that field experiences were organized into a planned sequence of experiences to help candidates develop and demonstrate knowledge and skills (Common Standard 7). In talking with other team members, the members acknowledged that some candidates and program completers had indicated that they felt supported during field experiences and were confident about their abilities to function effectively in a classroom (an example of disconfirming evidence). The *CSR* indicated that these experiences were incorporated into several courses, but it was difficult to find clear evidence that sufficient planning had been done to ensure the field experiences were appropriately sequenced and that candidates were able to incorporate material from courses into their field experiences. Faculty interviews revealed that each faculty member thought others were focusing on this topic.

Here is a logical, verifiable relationship. If field experience and clinical practice turned up in interviews as a weakness across multiple programs, one would expect to find little attention paid to it in the formal curriculum. In the above example, this appears to be the case. Therefore, the preponderance of evidence indicates that Common Standard Seven is either "Met with Concerns" or "Not Met." If these concerns arise only in one program, the decision for the common standards would likely be "Met," and the program cluster team members would need to determine how to report their findings on that standard.

Triangulate and Avoid Bias
When the team has similar information from different sources about how an institution is implementing a standard, it is easier to come to consensus about the findings. Repeated evidence from believable sources helps the team make its decisions. Avoid over-emphasizing testimony from a small number of articulate, informed, or high status respondents. Avoid campus politics –

something that is inevitable even in the most positive work environment. Team members must be diligent not to impose their own values and beliefs about how educator preparation "should" be done on the data collection and analysis performed for the accreditation site visit. It can be helpful to look carefully at extreme cases where people with the most at stake reveal contrary data. This can be powerful information if it is not tainted by ulterior motives. Finally, not all data are equal. Volunteered information collected from people with low bias but high knowledge about the program can be weighted more heavily than can information from respondents with high bias but little familiarity with the program.

Writing the Team Report

The report should be written with this purpose in mind; to inform the COA about the extent to which an institution and its educator preparation programs satisfy applicable standards and to support the COA in rendering an accreditation decision. Basic declarative prose utilizing simple sentences, active verbs, and clearly defined subjects will result in a valuable report. Findings should be supported by evidence collected by the team during the visit. The report should contain specific comments about the group's judgments of program quality, strengths or deficiencies, and suggestions for improvement. The team lead will edit the final draft of all report sections for clarity, smoothness, and uniformity.