PROGRAM SPONSOR ALERT

Date: June 24, 2010   **Number:** 10-12

Subject: Maintaining a current program document and responding to document review feedback

Summary

This notice is to remind all institutions that they should maintain a current program document for each program. The document needs to be updated as the program is modified based on the analysis of data and the continuous improvement focus of the Commission's accreditation cycle.

Additionally, this notice provides information on best practices for responding to Initial Program Review (IPR) feedback and Program Assessment (PA) feedback that will facilitate reader review of the additional information and assist the sponsor in developing a final and complete program document.

Background

Prior to the implementation of the current accreditation system, the general practice was to write a program document, participate in the review process, and then shelve the document until the next accreditation site visit which was 5-7 years away. Documents would typically not be updated until it was time to prepare for the site visit. The revised accreditation system expects program sponsors to continuously improve their programs and to update program narratives accordingly.

As stated in chapter four of the Accreditation Handbook: "The overarching goal of the accreditation system is to ensure that educator preparation programs are aligned with the Common Standards which require, among other things, that institutions develop comprehensive data collection systems to support continuous program improvement and to demonstrate candidates' knowledge and skills for educating and supporting all students in meeting the state-adopted academic standards."

Program documents provide the narrative explaining how the program meets (or plans to meet for Initial Program documents) to the educator preparation program standards. As programs are modified through the continuous improvement process, or in response to updated program standards, it is advisable that institutions update program documents, at least annually. The program document then becomes a "living" document that continually incorporates the changes and improvements that the program sponsor makes to the program.

Best Practices for Maintaining a Current Document
There are specific times when a program document must be updated. These include during the initial program review (IPR) and the program assessment process. Programs seeking Initial Program Approval provide a document written from the perspective of how a program plans to meet the standards. Likewise, Program Assessment, conducted in the fourth year of the accreditation cycle, requires that programs provide a written document describing how the program is actually implemented by responding to standards. Both processes require a review of the institutional response by experts, usually members of the Board of Institutional Reviewers (BIR), and usually result in a request for additional information before the review can be concluded.

Updating the Program Document during Initial Program Review or Program Assessment
With both IPR and Program Assessment, feedback is provided from the readers back to the program. For responses requiring additional information, programs should amend the original submission document and **emphasize the new information** so that readers may easily find the new information. Emphasizing the new information can be done by changing the font color to a noticeably different color (i.e. blue, green, or purple), or highlighting the new text using the highlight tool found in most word processing software programs.

Emphasizing the new information assists the readers as they strive to complete their second or third review of the program document and provide additional feedback to the program. To facilitate a timely review process, and to keep the information fresh in the reader's minds, it is expected that programs will submit the requested information within the next month of receiving the request for additional information from the reviewers. (If programs anticipate that it will take longer than one month, they should provide the Commission with an approximate date for submission of requested information.)

Submitting additional information for the readers in the manner described below will facilitate the institution's development of a clean, comprehensive program narrative once the review processes are completed.

Completing the Review Process and Submitting the Final Document:

Initial Program Review:
Once the initial program proposal has been deemed by the reviewers to meet all program standards, a final, updated, and complete electronic document is due to the Commission. This electronic document will be filed at the Commission. As the program is being implemented, program personnel should continue to update the document to reflect how the program is actually meeting standards. Making these changes as they occur will make submitting the documentation for Program Assessment in year four of the accreditation

cycle much easier. The updated document should not be sent to the Commission until the Program Assessment year.

Program Assessment:
Once the PA review is complete and all standards have been deemed to be *Preliminarily Aligned,* a final, electronic copy of the document with no unnecessary font color or highlight must be submitted to the Commission. This final document will be used by members of the accreditation site visit team.

<u>On-going Updates to Program Documents at the Institution</u>
Beyond IPR and PA, institutions should update their program narrative document whenever changes are made to the program that impacts how the program is aligned to the program standards. It is up to the institution to update its documents, however Commission staff suggest that an annual review of the narratives might be worthwhile. In addition, while Common Standards are not reviewed until the site visit, it is beneficial for the institution to update the Common Standards narrative (or Institutional Report for NCATE institutions) on an annual or biennial time line as well, as this will lessen the amount of work to be done prior to the site visit.

The Biennial Report process requires the institution to identify changes consistent with adopted program standards in response to a program's analyses of candidate competence and program evaluation data. The Biennial Report process provides an ideal opportunity to update the program narrative. Although this updated standards document is not submitted along with the Biennial Report, the biennial report process requires the institution to consider necessary changes to a program's response to the standards and provides an ideal opportunity to update the program narrative.

By updating program documents periodically, less effort will be required in preparation for Program Assessment or a site visit than has traditionally been the case in the past. The institution's narrative addressing the Common Standards should also be reviewed and updated as changes are made in the implementation of its approved educator preparation programs throughout the accreditation cycle.

Please note: *it is not necessary to resubmit your updated program narrative to the Commission when changes are made during the seven year cycle—The Biennial Report contextual information provides the information to the Commission. Program documents are only submitted during the Initial Program Approval and Program Assessment review processes.*

References
Accreditation webpage: http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/program-accred.html
Program Assessment web page: http://www.ctc.ca.gov/educator-prep/program-accred-assessment.html

Contact Information
Initial Program Review – ipr@ctc.ca.gov
Program Assessment – programassessment@ctc.ca.gov
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