

May 2007

Amended to include recommendations from UAB/SASB Task Force

Proposal for Program Review Decisions: A More Formative Approach

One of NCATE's goals is to foster stronger educator preparation programs. For that reason, we place emphasis on the self-study aspect of program review and the use of assessment evidence by programs and units to identify areas for improvement on a continuing basis. Our own review processes, too, need to make use of evidence about their effectiveness and their consequences. We have found that there is too much discussion, now, about rates of approval and not enough about ways NCATE can encourage programs to develop. This paper proposes a modification of terminology and decision timelines with the intent of creating a more constructive climate for developing strong programs that will earn "national recognition" status.

Background:

NCATE and the Program Review Task Force underestimated programs' development of the five required types of assessments that could be used to demonstrate candidate mastery of the SPA standards. According to an in-depth analysis of secondary-content program reports that were 'not recognized' during the Spring 06 cycle, low approval rates are not a result of these SPAs holding to a benchmark that is set too high. To the contrary, the evaluation indicates that SPAs are using decision-making principles that appear to be both consistent and fair. In most cases the assessments, scoring guides, and data presented for review were not adequate to demonstrate candidate mastery of the SPA standards. Unit-wide (or generic) assessments were submitted to meet specific SPA standards and/or the assessments submitted often did not clearly align with the content of the SPA standards. According to conversations with other SPA Coordinators, it appears that this conclusion is also generalizable to other SPAs.

NCATE and the SPAs are currently providing specific information to institutions about the need to modify generic assessments and to ensure that assessments meet specific SPA standards. However, it will take time for institutions to understand the necessity of doing this work and to implement the necessary changes.

During the Fall 05 and Spring 06 cycles, the average program approval rate across all SPAs was close to 45%. This number represents a marked increase over previous semesters (largely due to an increased use of the conditions decision) and demonstrates the SPAs' willingness to work with programs and give them time to develop assessments. However, this means that over half of the programs are not recognized. This is extremely discouraging to institutions, program faculty, and state personnel and can have severe consequences to programs, especially those in states that require national recognition of all programs. A negative decision is particularly difficult for programs that achieved national recognition in previous review cycles. Most feel that their programs have continued to be of high quality and that they are being penalized because of the recent changes to the program review requirements for evaluation.

It is necessary to find a way to create a climate that will allow the new program review process to mature, without penalizing programs. The following proposal is presented as a possibility for discussion.

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This proposal puts into place at the program level what is already a part of the unit review. A unit that is accredited and undergoing a continuing review cannot lose its accreditation immediately. There are several options that can be applied to the unit, but none of them terminate the accreditation without giving the unit time to remediate the issues. This proposal would apply the same logic to the program review and eliminate the application of a “Not Recognized” decision at least until the Unit Accreditation Board meets to make a decision on the unit.

The program review, given this proposal, would be more formative in nature. Programs that meet standards would receive national recognition. But those programs still in transition would not be penalized immediately. They would be given at least two subsequent opportunities to submit new documentation detailing the further development of their assessments.

This proposal maintains the integrity of the SPA review and affirms a longstanding belief of the SPAS—that achieving program recognition is a developmental process and a program may need several submissions to get it right. It also reflects the data on recognition decisions, which show that a large majority of programs achieve national recognition after a second review, and smaller number do so after a third review.

Proposal for Review of a Program not Currently Recognized:

Those programs that are going through review for the first time will have several opportunities to submit reports before a final recognition decision is applied. This will allow new programs the opportunity to receive feedback and make changes in their programs without being penalized with a “not recognized” decision. It will also allow the program review process to be more collaborative between the SPAs and the program faculty. A program that is being evaluated for the first time will receive one of the following three results:

1. National Recognition contingent upon unit accreditation
 - The program substantially meets standards.
 - No further submission required, program will receive full national recognition when the unit receives accreditation
 - Program will be listed on the NCATE web site as Nationally Recognized pending unit accreditation
2. Conditional National Recognition
 - The program generally meets standards; however, one or more conditions must be remediated within 18 months to be eligible for recognition. A Response to Conditions report must be submitted within the same 18 months. Conditions could include one or more of the following:
 - Insufficient data to determine if standards are met
 - Insufficient alignment among standards or scoring assessments or scoring guides
 - Lack of quality in some assessments or scoring guides
 - The SPA-required number of standards is not met.
 - The NCATE requirement for an 80% pass rate on state licensure tests is not met

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- The program will have two opportunities within the 18-month window to remove the Condition. If the program is unsuccessful after two attempts, the program status will be changed to Not Recognized.
- Program is listed on the NCATE web site as Nationally Recognized until it achieves National Recognition or its status is changed to Not Recognized

3. Further Development Required:

- The standards that are not met are serious and more than a few in number OR are few in number but so fundamental that recognition is not appropriate.
- The unit may submit a revised program report addressing unmet standards within 18 months, or
- The unit may submit a new program report for national recognition within 18 months.

A program could receive a decision of Not Nationally Recognized only after three submissions within the 18 month period were unsuccessful in reaching National Recognition or Conditional National Recognition.

Proposal for Review of a Program that is Currently Recognized:

Program reports that were approved by a SPA during the previous review cycle will not be jeopardy of losing their recognition status immediately upon their review in a current cycle. These program reports would receive one of the following three decisions:

1. Continued National Recognition

- The program substantially meets standards.
- No further submission required
- Program is listed on the NCATE web site as Nationally Recognized

2. Continued National Recognition with Conditions

- The program generally meets standards; however, one or more conditions must be remediated within 18 months to be eligible for recognition. A Response to Conditions report must be submitted within the same 18 months. Conditions could include one or more of the following:
 - Insufficient data to determine if standards are met
 - Insufficient alignment among standards or scoring assessments or scoring guides
 - Lack of quality in some assessments or scoring guides
 - The SPA-required number of standards is not met.
 - The NCATE requirement for an 80% pass rate on state licensure tests is not met
- The program will have two opportunities to remove the Condition within the 18 month window. If the program is unsuccessful after two attempts, the program status will be changed to Not Recognized.
- Program is listed on the NCATE web site as Nationally Recognized until it achieves National Recognition or its status is changed to Not Recognized

3. Continued National Recognition with Probation

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- The standards that are not met are serious and more than a few in number OR are few in number but so fundamental that recognition is not appropriate. The unit may submit a revised program report addressing unmet standards within 18 months, or the unit may submit a new program report for national recognition within 18 months.
 - A revised report must be submitted. If the program does not reach eligibility for national recognition by the time the UAB meets the final decision will either be Nationally Recognized with Conditions or Not Nationally Recognized. This will be determined by the most recent national program review team.
- The program will have two opportunities within the 18 months to attain national recognition or national recognition with conditions. If the program is unsuccessful after two attempts, the program status will be changed to Not Recognized
- Program is listed on the NCATE web site as Nationally Recognized until it achieves National Recognition or its status is changed to Not Recognized

A program could receive a decision of Not Nationally Recognized only after three submissions within the 18 month period were unsuccessful in reaching either Continued National Recognition or Continued National Recognition with Conditions.

Review Process:

Reviewers will continue to review as they have done in previous semesters. After the review is complete NCATE staff can determine which reports are from continuing institutions, make decision changes as necessary, and add the standard language. This will ensure that the program will receive specific feedback based on its submitted report. Each semester NCATE will provide to the SPA Coordinator a final list of all programs with their final decisions.

List of Nationally Recognized Programs on NCATE Web Site:

Currently, once programs receive national recognition or national recognition with conditions, they are listed as such on the NCATE web site. There is no differentiation between those programs that are fully recognized or those that are recognized with conditions. During the April 2007 meeting of the UAB/SASB Task Force (that included members of the UAB P& E Committee) it was proposed that the listing on the NCATE web site be changed so that those programs that were recognized with conditions would be listed that way—so that these programs would be distinct from those programs that were fully recognized. Several attendees felt that the public should be aware of the difference between these two decisions; others felt that the new system was still in transition and it would be too punitive at this point to make the distinction on the web site. The proposed change was defeated by the attendees (5 against, 4 for).