

**A Guide for Performance-Based Assessment,
Accountability, and Program Development in
School Psychology Training Programs
(2nd edition)**

**A companion document to:
*NASP Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs
in School Psychology (2000)***

Nancy Waldron and Joseph Prus

National Association of School Psychologists

March, 2006

http://www.nasponline.org/standards/approvedtraining/training_program.aspx

A Guide for Performance-Based Assessment, Accountability, and Program Development in School Psychology Training Programs

Introduction

Educational reform initiatives have shifted the focus of American education from issues relating to process to issues relating to outcomes. Discussions of schooling have moved from emphases on process requirements, such as course credits for a diploma, to emphases on demonstrations of knowledge and performance. Standards, outcomes, and accountability are now seen as the foundation of education. Just as public school educators are grappling with these issues in relation to student achievement, assessment and instruction, faculty in higher education are also engaged in a process of reconsidering the preparation of professionals from a similar perspective.

The restructuring of professional preparation programs in education has focused on continuous assessment of performance-based standards that define what graduates must know and be able to do. It is thus important that programs establish linkages among (1) training standards that specify professional competencies, (2) continuous performance-based assessment of both individual candidates and program outcomes, and (3) requirements for state and national certification/licensure that focus on the demonstration of professional skills (Wise & Leibrand, 1996).

Over the last twenty-five years, national accreditation standards have continued to move away from emphases on input and process variables and to give more attention to critical professional competencies and outcomes which reflect the knowledge and skills that a new professional should demonstrate at the completion of a training program. The most recent criteria of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2002) reflect substantial movement in the direction of performance-based accreditation. To add further emphasis to this movement and to assist professional education units, NCATE's Specialty Area Studies Board, which represents 20 national specialized professional associations including NASP, developed *Principles for Performance-Based Assessment Systems in Professional Education Programs* (NCATE, 2000).

The current version of *Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology* (NASP, 2000) mirrors the changes reflected in the NCATE standards, and in the national movement in the preparation of education professionals. Moreover, requirements relating to performance-based accountability are not new to NASP standards. The previous version of the training standards (NASP, 1994) required programs to demonstrate how they ensured that all graduates were able to demonstrate positive, measurable change with regard to the educational or mental health needs of children and youth. The most recent NASP standards for school psychology training programs (NASP, 2000) have moved further away from emphasizing program curriculum and course offerings, to an even greater focus on demonstrations by programs that they are preparing candidates with critical professional knowledge and skills reflected in the NASP domains of professional practice. School psychology programs have demonstrated considerable success in meeting these increased performance expectations. During the period 1995 to 2000, 43% of the programs reviewed by NASP received full or conditional approval. During the period 2001 to June 2005, 68% of reviewed programs were approved.

In response to concerns regarding different performance expectations of its affiliated specialized professional associations and other concerns regarding the program review process, NCATE convened a task force in 2003 to study the feasibility of implementing a more standardized, streamlined program submission and review process. The task force, which included representatives of institutions, professional associations, states, and other stakeholders recommended the design and implementation of an electronic “single program review process” for all NCATE-affiliated associations. Subsequently, a common template for electronically submitting a limited amount of program “contextual” information and the results of 6-8 performance assessments was developed by NCATE with input from its affiliated associations. Required candidate assessments focus on content knowledge (including the results of state licensing examinations), the ability to plan and carry out professional responsibilities, intern evaluations by field supervisors or supervising teachers, professional skills, and the ability to positively impact student learning or learning environments. The NCATE template also requires programs to aggregate results over three years of program

completers and to document how candidate assessment results have been used to make program improvements. Although a web-based format for submitting and reviewing program information and integrating the results of program reviews into the NCATE unit accreditation process was also envisioned, technical problems have delayed the implementation of the web format and required alternative electronic submission processes. Nonetheless, beginning in the fall of 2004 all NCATE associations, except NASP, were piloting the common submission template when conducting program reviews.

In 2005, NASP completed the development of a prototype program submission template that differed from that used by other NCATE associations but retained the basic elements required by NCATE. The template includes programmatic information needed to show program compliance with critical NASP standards linked to national certification, but centers on six required assessments and two optional assessments needed to show that candidates have attained the knowledge, skills, and professional work characteristics needed to deliver a range of school psychology services that positively impact children, youth, families, and other consumers. NASP plans to pilot the new template in the fall of 2006 and implement it fully in 2007.

It is clear that the increasing emphasis on performance outcomes will likely continue in both accreditation and credentialing. The performance-based nature of the NASP training standards is now reflected in the requirements for national certification in school psychology. Whereas applicants for the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential once provided documentation that they completed coursework and internship consistent with NASP standards, applicants are now required to present a portfolio demonstrating attainment of knowledge and skills consistent with the NASP domains of professional practice. It is important to note that graduates of NASP approved programs are assumed to have demonstrated such attainment by virtue of completing a program that has been determined to adhere to NASP performance assessment requirements. Although NCSP applicants have always had to pass the Praxis II examination in school psychology administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), the new NCSP case study requirements are more in-depth, are evaluated using a standard rubric, and emphasize the provision of a range of services consistent with a

problem-solving model. Again, graduates of NASP approved programs are assumed to have completed a comprehensive, performance-based assessment evaluated by program faculty and are thus not required to submit a case study.

Purpose of the Guide

The first edition of this guide (Waldron, Prus & Curtis, 2001) was developed as a companion document to *Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology* (NASP, 2000). The current version has been updated to include new NCATE performance assessment requirements. The purpose of the document is to provide school psychology training programs with guidelines and suggested practices in the area of performance-based assessment and accountability. A framework is presented that will assist programs with the development of a comprehensive, program-based system of performance assessment and accountability that can be used to evaluate the competencies of all school psychology candidates and graduates.

Our foremost intent is for the standards and associated review process to provide a sound basis for program development and evaluation that ensures the quality preparation of school psychologists, and that facilitates the provision of effective school psychological services for the children, youth, families, and others served by our profession.

The topics addressed in this guide include:

Methods that a program might employ to assess the competencies and performance of school psychology candidates and graduates.

Guidelines and suggested practices for developing or improving a comprehensive system of candidate and program assessment.

Information about program review and documentation/evidence that will be required of all school psychology programs.

Assessment of Individual Candidate Competencies and Performance

School psychology is well situated to respond to performance-based training standards, accreditation procedures that emphasize program responsibility to demonstrate

candidate competency, and the increasing use of knowledge-based tests and performance-based assessments to attain certification and licensure. NASP has maintained a national certification system that includes a performance-based component since 1988, and has included requirements for program assessment and accountability in its training standards since 1994. Additionally, school psychology programs have long required extensive field-based experiences (practica and internship) that provide a context for the development and assessment of professional skills. However, past emphasis has been on the processes and inputs associated with such training opportunities. School psychology programs, as well as other professional preparation programs, now are being encouraged to consider a broader array of methods for assessing and documenting outcomes. Thus, assessment methods utilized by programs should provide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate both what they know, and what they can do.

School psychology faculty, by virtue of their expertise in assessment and individual differences, are uniquely qualified to bring this knowledge to bear on the consideration of candidate performance in graduate training programs. The considerations are similar to those that we remind our own students about when conducting an individual assessment of a learner: awareness of the purpose of the assessment, selection of appropriate and technically adequate assessment procedures, consideration of the consequences of assessment, and linking assessment results to intended outcomes.

As we know, assessment is best conducted through multiple sources of information and multiple methods of gathering data. Specific assessment measures should be selected on the basis of factors such as:

Reliability, validity, and utility.

The need for multiple methods that represent multiple data sources, multiple environments, and the assessment of multiple domains.

The need for methods that allow assessment across time, and provide continuous monitoring of progress toward desired goals and outcomes.

Assessment procedures that reflect these same characteristics are those that should be evident in school psychology training programs. Various methods that programs might

employ when assessing the competencies and performance of individual school psychology candidates are subsequently presented. As programs consider a range of assessment procedures, choices should be made to use methods that are best suited to the training philosophy, institutional context, and desired outcomes of an individual program. The methods presented here are particularly useful for evaluating candidate performance and may often serve as a form of culminating assessment. It is recognized that each school psychology training program is likely to have a different set of assessment methods to reflect unique features and competencies that are emphasized.

Specific assessment methods that programs might wish to consider are examinations, performance appraisals, case studies, simulations, portfolios, candidate and graduate questionnaires, exit interviews, and surveys of supervisors, employers, and other external constituents. Each assessment method will be briefly described, along with some considerations that may influence its use in a school psychology preparation program.

Examinations

There are various examination options available to school psychology programs to assess candidate knowledge. Examinations may be designed to assess knowledge specific to individual courses and topics, or to assess the synthesis and integration of knowledge areas within the program or as reflected in national and/or state professional standards. Examinations are often locally developed, and thus have a clear relationship to the program curriculum. Locally-developed examinations frequently used in school psychology training programs are comprehensive or qualifying examinations, and oral examinations.

While having many strengths, locally-developed examinations may not sufficiently address issues of *external* validity. Thus, another examination option often used by school psychology programs is standardized national and/or state licensing examinations. These examinations typically reflect content consistent with national and/or state standards, and provide a reference group comparison that programs may choose to use as one piece of information about individual candidate performance. NASP began requiring programs to provide data on such examinations as part of the implementation of its 2000 standards and NCATE, under a United States Department of Education mandate followed

suit shortly thereafter. Neither NASP nor NCATE require that programs have a particular pass score as part of program completion/degree requirements, but NCATE requires programs in states with a mandated licensing examination to demonstrate at least an 80% pass rate for program completers in order to qualify for national recognition.

Performance Appraisals

This form of assessment allows for an overt demonstration of skills, often in authentic or real-life situations. Performance appraisals assess skill development and attainment; and thus the application and generalization of knowledge and skills to specific settings and situations. While authentic settings and demonstration of skills are powerful factors, it is critical that performance appraisals include specific and operational criteria for observing and evaluating the performance of a candidate. Within school psychology programs, performance appraisals are often embedded in courses that address professional skill development in areas such as assessment, consultation, and intervention, as well as in practica and internship requirements. Some examples include: faculty and field supervisor observations of candidates working with clients in field sites; video or audiotapes of candidate sessions with clients that are later evaluated by an instructor; candidates completing self-appraisals of specific skills in areas such as interviewing, test administration, and counseling through the use of a standard evaluation system that specifies performance criteria; and field supervisors evaluating candidate performance over a designated period of time through the use of a practicum or internship evaluation form. Program documentation of the results of field supervisor evaluations of interns has been required by NASP since its 2000 training standards, and practica evaluations are included as one required assessment in the NASP/NCATE program submission template.

Case Studies

Case studies, or in-depth descriptions of referred cases and associated services and outcomes in authentic settings, are another means to assess the application of knowledge and professional skill development, along with broad or specific issues of professional practice. Case studies can also serve to evaluate reasoning, in-depth

understanding, and integration of knowledge, and as a means of assessing knowledge and practice skills. The use of cases that involve complex child and youth issues, as well as the integration of skills across various areas such as assessment, consultation, and intervention may be part of a culminating evaluation of program candidates.

Because cases vary substantially in terms of referring issues, client characteristics/needs, service settings, and other issues, it is important for programs to provide candidates with parameters/requirements for case studies. Such requirements might address client age ranges, types of referring questions or issues, types of service provision (e.g., assessment, counseling, behavioral analysis/intervention, consultation), and requirements for assessing outcomes. Examples of case studies may be helpful in illustrating expectations. It is also important that candidates be provided with criteria or rubrics by which case studies will be evaluated. Such rubrics or criteria will vary depending on the case study requirements. Applicants for national certification in school psychology who did not complete a NASP approved graduate program are required to submit a case study demonstrating provision of school psychology services consistent with national standards.

Simulations

Direct assessment of skills in authentic settings is not always possible. Therefore, the use of simulations that approximate “real life” events and settings offer an alternative means of assessing candidate competencies. Within school psychology programs, simulations are frequently used as a precursor to actual practice in the field. This allows for a “low risk” application and integration of knowledge and skills to cases that approximate professional practice. Other major advantages of simulations are that they can standardize assessments across candidates (i.e., all candidates can be exposed to the same case), and assess candidate response to low probability but important events such as ethical dilemmas and crisis situations. It is for these reasons that simulations may be useful as part of comprehensive examinations or other culminating assessments.

Portfolios

Portfolios that include candidate work samples are frequently used in school psychology programs as a method of culminating assessment presented and evaluated at the end of a program. The contents of a portfolio can be chosen to reflect developing knowledge, skills, and professional competencies; they can also be chosen to reflect “best work” and the attainment of specified professional competencies. The work samples or products most frequently found in school psychology program portfolios are: practica products/cases; internship products/cases; course-related products; field site/internship supervisor evaluations; self-reflection statements; research project; and resumes (Prus & Martin, 2000). When considering the specific products or cases that portfolios include from practica and internship, the following professional competencies may be addressed: assessment, consultation, behavior analysis/intervention, counseling, research, training/in-service, prevention, and supervision.

Critical aspects of using portfolios as a candidate assessment measure are providing specific detail about the type of products to be included, and providing evaluation criteria that will be applied to the portfolio products. Given the diversity of products in many portfolios, it is often necessary to develop multiple evaluation criteria (e.g., one for assessment and intervention cases, another for in-service presentations, and another for research papers).

Candidate and Graduate Questionnaires

Another means of assessing the competency of candidates and graduates is to engage them in reflection through the use of questionnaires that address the components of the preparation program, professional competencies, and professional goals. It must be recognized that these questionnaires are designed to assess perceptions and opinions, not observed behavior or demonstration of knowledge and skills. While self-report data should be interpreted cautiously, it may serve as an excellent source of information regarding the correspondence across program goals and objectives, faculty perceptions, and candidate/graduate perceptions. Questionnaires should be carefully developed to allow for this triangulation of data sources, and thus inform individual candidate assessment and future program development efforts.

Exit Interviews

Interviews conducted by faculty at the end of a candidate's program allow for individualization of questions and follow-up probes that are not possible on a written questionnaire or survey. While a standard interview protocol should be used with all candidates, flexibility is needed to clarify and expand on ideas and issues that arise during the interview. Exit interviews often include the same content as student and graduate questionnaires, but allow for personal interaction. This interaction may serve to encourage responses from some candidates, and inhibit responses from others. To ensure consistency in content and the best probability of effective student-faculty interaction, school psychology programs should carefully consider which faculty are to conduct exit interviews. There are also alternative ways to complete an exit interview, such as conducting telephone interviews, having candidates complete a brief questionnaire first and then discuss responses during a shorter interview session, and randomly selecting a sample of students to interview.

Surveys of Supervisors, Employers, and Other External Constituents

While faculty in school psychology programs are often the primary evaluators of a candidate's professional competency, the perspective that external constituents bring to the assessment process is often unique and valuable. Through the process of surveying practicum supervisors, internship supervisors, and employers, a school psychology program is able to obtain a measure of how well candidates generalize knowledge and skills to a field setting and perform independently. This input provides multiple perspectives, and offers an element of objectivity that programs may not achieve when only considering the perspectives of faculty and students within the program. A frequent by-product of requesting input from external constituents is that collaborative relationships are established and reinforced which serve to enhance the program and the efforts of faculty.

It is important that evaluation criteria or rubrics for performance assessment methods such as case studies, simulations, and portfolios be operationalized and

communicated to candidates as a clear indication of program expectations. Programs may choose to provide candidates with samples of completed work or specific products that clearly convey such expectations. Once criteria have been developed, efforts should be made to establish inter-rater reliability through the use of multiple raters for each product. While school psychology program faculty are most often involved in the evaluation of case studies or portfolios, programs may also choose to involve other individuals, such as field supervisors, in the process.

As programs consider these various methods, it is clear that assessment of candidates must go beyond simple indicators of achievement such as course grades and overall GPA. However, grades in courses *may* be useful as one measure of the success of candidates, and are included as one option for documenting content knowledge in the NASP/NCATE submission template. Course grades are data, not assessments, but represent the outcomes of assessments evaluated by faculty teaching courses. In order for course grades to be useful for documenting attainment of candidate knowledge and skills in the NASP/NCATE program review process, the course must be completed by all candidates and must include content and assessments relevant to the NASP domains for which they are being cited. Course documentation must show that candidates are being assessed in content and/or skills relevant to those domains (i.e., syllabi must reflect course objectives, content, readings/assignments, and the assessments which contribute to the grade). Grades must be aggregated across cohorts in the program to demonstrate that candidates routinely meet minimum performance criteria. As part of the NASP review process, programs must link particular courses or groups of courses to relevant NASP domains.

Regardless of particular methods used by any school psychology program, the assessments must be consistent with stated program goals and objectives, and reflect candidate competencies in professional practice domains. Moreover, assessment must be based on multi-method and multi-source approaches that are used throughout the candidate's preparation, as well as culminating evidence demonstrating competencies upon completion of the program. Thus, not only are courses and required activities completed, but competencies are demonstrated in the domains of professional practice and other areas emphasized by the program. For example, in one school psychology

program the selected assessment procedures may include course examinations, observations and evaluation of practicum activities, a written comprehensive examination, supervisor evaluation of internship performance, and the presentation of a professional portfolio at the completion of internship. A second school psychology program may use course examinations, observations and evaluation of practicum activities, completion of a series of case studies, supervisor evaluation of internship performance, and an exit interview with program faculty. As school psychology programs expand the methods used to assess candidate competency and performance, consideration must be given to how these various methods and approaches are integrated into a comprehensive system of assessment.

Characteristics of Performance-Based Program Assessment and Accountability

School psychology programs must consider how the individual assessment approaches selected for use with program candidates reflect a comprehensive system of assessment for the program. A system of assessment has distinct characteristics and serves to not only inform the program of individual candidate performance, but also provides an opportunity for programs to consider assessment data across multiple candidates. This is one means of program evaluation that can inform program development efforts. The following section will present critical features and characteristics of a performance-based system of assessment, and discuss the application of such a system to school psychology programs.

NCATE Specialty Area Studies Board Principles for Performance-Based Assessment Systems in Professional Education Programs (2000) establishes certain qualities that should characterize a comprehensive, performance-based system. According to those principles, each program will have a comprehensive system of assessment, accountability, and program development that:

Is clearly delineated in program policy, and is consistent with stated program philosophy and goals.

Uses multiple measures of knowledge and skills.

Embeds assessment activities in the program in meaningful ways.

Uses assessment methods on a continuous basis, throughout the program.

Identifies, evaluates, and communicates benchmarks of performance (unsatisfactory, acceptable, superior) in the program and across competency areas to school psychology candidates.

Complements program assessment information with information available from external sources.

Aggregates assessment information across candidates and graduates to inform program development and improvement.

What are the implications of these principles for a school psychology program?

1. Each program is encouraged to develop an assessment and evaluation system to provide comprehensive information on each candidate's proficiency in relation to the performance-based standards. There is no single way to assure that candidates meet the performance-based standards, or to judge candidate mastery of the standards at acceptable levels of proficiency.
2. An assessment and evaluation system should be implemented that ensures that all school psychology candidates have acquired and demonstrated the requisite knowledge and professional competencies identified by the program in accordance with the domains of professional practice.
3. A program should demonstrate a multi-method approach, using multiple data sources, and multiple environments, in the assessment of candidate/intern competencies and the ability of candidates to bring about positive impact on children and youth.
4. Programs are to describe the system of assessment and to demonstrate the relationship between that system and program goals and philosophy. The assessment methods should be tied to program goals and objectives, have specific operational criteria that are applied, and involve both the faculty and intern supervisors or others in their implementation.
5. Evidence should be provided that the program systematically uses individual candidate assessment data and other evaluation information for programmatic self-evaluation and improvement. To demonstrate the use of assessment information,

programs are encouraged to summarize and aggregate data from designated assessment procedures. This might be done by summarizing results as averages, range of responses, modal responses, examples of written responses, and/or other forms of data analysis. The program should demonstrate how it makes use of these data to regularly revise the program and assure that all candidates meet the standards for proficiency in the recognized areas of professional practice.

6. The assessment system must be integrated into the learning experiences of the program and not merely represent a series of course evaluation activities, or unrelated, add-on tasks that are not explicitly tied to program objectives and outcomes. The results of the assessment system should be helpful to individual candidates, program operation and revision, and for meeting program approval requirements.
7. The performance-based assessment and accountability system should be an assessment plan for both individual candidates and the program. This assessment plan specifies assessment and evaluation activities, their link to the national training standards, and how the program conceptualizes a system of assessment for the program to not only assure individual candidate competencies but also inform ongoing program development and improvement.

As one aide to program self-evaluation and development, the NASP Program Approval Board has developed a “checklist” for analyzing program documentation for performance-based standards and associated expectations for assessment and accountability. The checklist was recently updated to reflect the assessment requirements in the new NASP/NCATE program submission template. The checklist may be found in Appendix B.

Program Review and Documentation

The adoption of *Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology* (NASP, 2000), with an emphasis on performance-based standards, places a greater responsibility on school psychology programs to describe and document program

goals and outcomes. It is the responsibility of the program to “make the case” that its policies and practices are consistent with programmatic standards and that its candidates are prepared to provide a comprehensive range of school psychological services consistent with the NASP domains (Standard II). Documentation of program requirements, a system of assessment and program development, and evidence demonstrating proficient candidate performance is a critical part of the program review and approval process. The review process is conducted to answer the question:

Is the program preparing school psychologists with the knowledge and skills necessary to provide a comprehensive range of school psychological services that positively impact children, youth, families, and other consumers?

Each training program undergoing review will provide specific evidence of how the NASP *Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology (2000)* are being met. The standards can be organized into two major types: programmatic standards and candidate performance standards. The programmatic standards include: Standard I - Program Context/Structure; Standard III - Field Experiences/Internship; Standard IV - Performance-based Program Assessment and Accountability; and Standard V - Program Support/Resources. The candidate performance standard is Standard II: Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice, which includes 11 specific domains. These domains are:

- Data-based decision-making and accountability
- Consultation and collaboration
- Effective instruction and development of cognitive/academic skills
- Socialization and development of life skills
- Student diversity in development and learning
- School and systems organization, policy development and climate
- Prevention, crisis intervention, and mental health
- Home/school/community collaboration
- Research and program evaluation
- School psychology practice and development

Information technology

Given the two types of standards, there is specific evidence needed to address the programmatic standards (Standards I, III, IV, V) that differs somewhat from the evidence needed to address the candidate performance standard (Standard II). The following sections describe various types of evidence and discuss how such evidence will be evaluated as part of the program review process.

Programmatic Standards and Associated Evidence

Programmatic standards (Standards I, III, IV, and V) are intended to assure consistency in the opportunities afforded students in a program and to assure that training processes are consistent with national standards. These standards require that programs provide policy and practice documentation. Documentation of pertinent policy is needed to show that a requirement has been “institutionalized” and thus applies to all candidates in the program. Evidence of practice is needed to demonstrate that the actual preparation of candidates is carried out in a manner consistent with stated program requirements and the relevant NASP standard(s). The only exception to this requirement is Standard V where documentation of policy or practice alone is sufficient to meet the standard. It should be noted that Standard V does not require a response from programs in institutions that are NCATE accredited or are undergoing NCATE review.

The following are examples of the types of policy and practice documentation that a program may submit. Note that some forms of documentation are required of all programs, while other forms are at the program’s discretion.

Examples of policy documentation:

Program handbook or comparable document(s) that describe the program’s philosophy/conceptual framework, goals/objectives, required curriculum, and policies (REQUIRED)

Description of the program’s system of candidate and program assessment and accountability (REQUIRED)

Relevant section(s) of the institution’s graduate catalog or bulletin

Practica/internship handbook(s)

Examples of practice documentation:

- Blinded transcripts or academic records of three recent (i.e., within the past academic year) program graduates (REQUIRED)
- Syllabi or similar course documentation (REQUIRED)
- Practica and internship performance evaluation forms (REQUIRED)
- Intern activity summaries for a recent graduating cohort or (at the discretion of the program) logs for two recent graduates (REQUIRED)
- Agreements with field sites specifying internship practices/requirements

Performance Standards and Associated Evidence

Performance standards (Standard II) are expressed in terms of “Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice.” These performance standards are intended to assure that training outcomes are consistent with national standards, and that program candidates/graduates are able to provide effective school psychological services that positively impact children, youth, families, and other consumers.

The documentation/evidence needed to respond to each candidate performance standard is different than what is required for the programmatic standards. As part of the implementation of its 2000 training standards, NASP required programs to submit evidence that each NASP domain is *addressed, assessed, and attained* in the program. These are described more fully below.

Addressed How does the program provide the knowledge and skills necessary for the development of competencies in a domain? To respond to this question in each domain area, evidence provided by a program might include: program goals/objectives; transcripts; course and practica syllabi; and internship requirements.

Assessed How does the program assess and monitor candidate competency in a domain? Evidence might include: course and practica evaluation

requirements; practica evaluation forms; documentation of the program assessment and monitoring system for individual candidates.

Attained How does the program determine that candidates/graduates have attained acceptable competence in a domain? Evidence might include: practica and internship performance appraisal results; a summary of results on state/national school psychology licensing examinations; results from a comprehensive performance-based culminating assessment; and results from alumni and/or employer surveys.

The new NASP/NCATE template continues to require that programs document how each NASP domain is addressed. Additionally, the template provides greater specificity with regard to which assessments are reported and greater structure in how assessments and associated results are reported as part of the program submission and review process. The following are the types of performance documentation *required* in the NASP/NCATE template:

1. Summary of program completers performance on the state school psychology credentialing examination or on the national examination (Praxis II examination in school psychology administered by the Educational Testing Service)
2. Program or course-embedded assessment of candidate knowledge. This might consist of a comprehensive examination, an oral or qualifying examination, an exam embedded in one or more courses that all candidates complete, or aggregated grades for courses in which NASP domains (Standards 2.1-2.11) are addressed.
3. Assessment of students during practica that shows they can effectively plan and carry out school psychological services. This assessment may consist of an assessment embedded in one or more separate courses requiring a practicum component or a required component in a more general practicum course.
4. Intern evaluations by field supervisors.
5. Summary of the results of a comprehensive, performance-based assessment of candidate abilities (e.g., case studies, portfolio) evaluated by faculty during internship

6. Assessment demonstrating that candidates are able to integrate domains of knowledge and apply professional skills in delivering a comprehensive range of services evidenced by measurable positive impact on children, youth, families, and other consumers (This need not be a separate assessment if it is addressed by assessment 5 above).
7. Additional assessment that addresses NASP domains (e.g., comprehensive or qualifying examination, exit surveys, alumni and/or employer follow-ups, theses, case studies, simulations, or similar measures). (OPTIONAL)
8. Additional assessment that addresses NASP domains (e.g., comprehensive or qualifying examination, exit surveys, alumni and/or employer follow-ups, theses, case studies, simulations, or similar measures). (OPTIONAL)

Please note that it is necessary to provide not just the results of program assessment methods, but also the requirements and corresponding criteria/rubrics. For example, if the program assesses all candidates using a case study approach, then the requirements for the case study, the criteria/rubric used to judge the case study, a summary of results, and the program's interpretation of the results should be provided. Other standards (e.g., Standard IV) require that the program demonstrate as part of its assessment system that it not only assesses and documents results, but also uses the results to evaluate and improve the program. This is a critical aspect of program development and accountability.

The Evaluation of Program Evidence

The NASP program review process involves the careful evaluation of program evidence in relation to national standards. This process is described more fully in *Program Approval Board Policies and Procedures (2004)*, available on the NASP website. As part of the program review process, each standard is evaluated using the following criteria:

- | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MET | The program has presented documentation/evidence that clearly establishes that the standard is met. |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

NOT MET The evidence provided by the program to document a standard is incomplete, unclear, or inconsistent with the standard; indicating that the standard is not met.

Another helpful document is the *NCATE Guidelines for Program Reviewers* that can be found at <http://ncate.org/documents/GuidelinesforReviewers102604>. This document contains general guidelines used by reviewers of online program submissions. The section on evaluation of program assessments notes a series of questions that reviewers use to evaluate whether program evidence demonstrates that NASP Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice (Standards 2.1 - 2.11) are *addressed, assessed, and attained*. The questions may also be useful to program faculty as they develop documentation for a program submission. The review questions include:

- A. Is the domain adequately *addressed* in required coursework, and other experiences?
- B. Do the *assessments* align with the components of the standard?
- C. Do the *assessments* assess meaningful cognitive demands and skill requirements at challenging levels for candidates?
- D. Are the *assessments* accurate and free from bias?
- E. Are the *assessment* scoring guides clear and levels of candidate proficiency distinct and appropriate?
- F. Do the data as reported indicate the extent to which the candidate meets the standards (*attainment*)?
- G. Is the standard met (*addressed, assessed, attained*)?

NASP approval and NCATE “National Recognition” (for programs in units accredited by NCATE) require that programs be clearly identifiable as being in school psychology and adhere to critical “structural” or programmatic standards pertaining to program length/credit hours, internship settings and clock hours, and training/supervision by appropriately qualified faculty and field supervisors. Institutional documentation of program completion must be provided. Finally, the preponderance of NASP Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice (Standard II) must be met.

Conclusion

The purpose of this document was to provide school psychology programs with guidelines and suggested practices for performance-based assessment and accountability. It will hopefully serve as a useful starting point for program self-evaluation and development as well as a stimulant for further development and research within our field.

For further information and materials on the NASP program review process and associated policies and procedures, please consult the NASP website or contact the chair of the Program Approval Board or the Manager for Professional Standards at:

NASP
4340 East West Highway
Suite 402
Bethesda, MD 20814

Phone: 301-657-0270

Website: www.nasponline.org/certification/training_program.html

References

National Association of School Psychologists (1994). *Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

National Association of School Psychologists (2000). *Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2000). *Specialty Area Studies Board Principles for Performance-Based Assessment Systems in Professional*

Education Programs. Washington, DC: National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2002). *Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education*. Washington, DC: National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Prus, J. (1997, April). *Culminating assessment in school psychology training programs: A review of methods*. Paper presented at a meeting of the Trainers of School Psychologists, Anaheim, CA.

Prus, J. & Martin, A. (2000, March). *Assessing candidate competency in school psychology training programs: Results of a national survey*. Paper presented at a meeting of the Trainers of School Psychologists, New Orleans, LA.

Waldron, N., Prus, J., & Curtis, M. (2001). *A guide for performance-based assessment, accountability, and program development in school psychology training programs (1st Edition)*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Wise, A. E., & Leibrand, J. (1996). Profession-based accreditation: A foundation for high-quality teaching. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 78(3), 202-206.

APPENDIX A

*National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education NCATE
Specialty Area Studies Board*

*Principles for Performance-Based Assessment Systems
in Professional Education Programs*

March, 2000

Assessing what professional educator candidates know and can do is critical to implementing the performance-based standards of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and its affiliated national professional specialty organizations. Given the complexities of teaching and other educational professions, the range of knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be assessed, the multiple purposes for which assessment results are used, and the stakes associated with the outcomes, assessment in professional education programs and units needs to include multiple measures implemented on a systematic and ongoing basis as part of a comprehensive system. This document outlines principles set forth by the NCATE Specialty Area Studies Board for performance-based assessment systems at the program level.

Although assessment systems will vary across programs and units, they generally should a) address the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be acquired by professional educator candidates as set forth in program goals; b) be consistent with the standards of relevant national and state accrediting/approval bodies; c) have multiple means for measuring candidate performance and impact; and d) provide on-going, systematic information useful for decision-making. It is particularly critical that assessment systems provide credible results that are collected and used in a fair, valid manner consistent with their intended purpose(s).

Assessment systems should have the following characteristics:

1. The system is driven by a conceptual framework and program values which espouse assessment as a vehicle for both individual and program self-evaluation and improvement. Assessment is planned and implemented by key stakeholders in a manner consistent with the method of inquiry in the discipline and is considered a means to an end rather than an end in itself.
2. The system includes components which work together in a synergistic manner to address the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of candidates across program goals, objectives and curriculum consistent with the performance-based standards of the respective national professional specialty. Assessment is a goal-oriented process linked to program purposes/goals and national standards.
3. Multiple measures are planned and administered on a systematic, ongoing basis throughout the program beginning with the admissions process. The system includes

quantitative and qualitative measures useful for formative and summative assessment. One or more measures designed to yield evidence of positive candidate impact on students is included in the system.

4. The system includes one or more measures which have been created, reviewed, and/or scored by specialty professionals external to the program. Such professionals include those with relevant specialized expertise whose primary responsibility is not to the program/unit, such as field-based master teachers, clinical teachers, intern supervisors, and/or supervisors/employers of program candidates/graduates.

5. The system is clearly delineated. Measures and associated criteria or rubrics (including minimal proficiency levels), as well as policies and practices for obtaining and using results, are described in program documents in a manner which candidates and other stakeholders can understand. Candidates are made aware of program standards and assessment requirements to which they will be held and are provided with models and/or examples of performance and the instruction and support needed to attain such levels.

6. The assessment methods and corresponding criteria included in the system are sufficiently comprehensive and rigorous to make important decisions about the proficiencies of candidates and to safeguard those they may potentially serve. Critical decision-making points are delineated in the system. Decisions that are made reflect the application of relevant criteria and use of results in a manner which discriminates acceptable versus unacceptable performance.

7. The system includes policies and procedures for the gathering, use, storage, and reporting of individual results. Such policies address the rights of individuals (e.g., those afforded candidates by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act; confidentiality/anonymity of survey responses). Individual candidate results are reported in a clear manner which acknowledges the source(s) and limitations of the data, individual strengths, and areas of needed or potential improvement.

8. The system includes a structure and procedures for sampling, analyzing, summarizing, and reporting aggregated results. Data are gathered on an ongoing basis and are summarized in a manner which reflects pass rates, the range of performances, and/or the “typical” or “average” performance (e.g., mean, median, or modal performance) as appropriate to the types of measures. Summaries of results are provided to key program stakeholders in a clear manner which acknowledges the source(s) and limitations of the data, data collection and reporting time frame, program strengths, and areas of needed or potential improvement.

9. The program and its assessment system foster the use of results for individual candidate and program improvement. Assessment results are regularly reviewed in relation to program goals and objectives as well as to relevant state and national standards and stimulate changes designed to optimize success.

10. The system has a mechanism and procedures for evaluating and improving itself and its component assessment methods. Evidence of the reliability and validity of the system and its component measures is gathered and used to make decisions about their ongoing use and/or revision. Evidence should address the ability of the system to comprehensively assess performance in a credible manner which is valid, fair, and unbiased.

APPENDIX B

Analyzing Program Documentation for NASP Performance-Based Standards and Associated Expectations for Program Assessment and Accountability

Revised March 2006

This is a tool by which a program might examine its documentation related to key NASP performance-based standards and expectations for program assessment and accountability. It is most applicable to standards pertaining to Program Assessment and Accountability (NASP standards 4.1-4.3) and to documenting that the Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice (NASP standards 2.1-2.11) are addressed, assessed, and attained. Please see *NASP Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology* (2000) for a complete description of standards and associated documentation. The NASP standards and associated program review information may be found at:

http://www.nasponline.org/certification/training_program.html.

Documenting the Program's Assessment and Accountability System

I. Program goals/objectives for candidate knowledge, skills and professional work characteristics consistent with NASP standards are contained in a program handbook or similar document.

- a. Goals/objectives are contained in program documents.
- b. Goals/objectives describe candidate knowledge, skills, and professional work characteristics.
- c. Goals/objectives address critical competencies in the NASP "Domains of School Psychology Training and Practice."

II. Program goals/objectives and associated NASP Domains are addressed in the required curricula

- a. Required coursework reflects program key goals/objectives and associated NASP Domains. (Note: if electives are cited as addressing standards, program goals/objectives must be addressed regardless of the course choices candidates make)
- b. Course documentation (e.g., syllabi) reflects coverage of content related to cited program goals/objectives and NASP Domains.
- c. Practica requirements and experiences are described in program documents.
- d. Practica requirements reflect program goals/objectives and associated NASP Domains.
- e. Internship requirements and experiences are described in program documents.
- f. Internship requirements reflect program goals/objectives and associated NASP Domains.
- g. Evidence (e.g., transcripts; completed practica and internship documentation such as agreements/logs/evaluations) exists that candidates complete required courses and field experiences.

III. The Program includes key assessments required by NASP and NCATE to show that candidates acquire knowledge, skills, and professional work characteristics consistent with program objectives and NASP standards, and are able to deliver a range of services

that positively impact children, youth, families, and other consumers. Such assessments include:

- ___ a. State and/or national credentialing examination for school psychology practice in schools
- ___ b. One additional assessment of content knowledge, including grades in courses containing content and assessments that address NASP Domains, comprehensive or qualifying examination, or other content measure(s) reflecting program objectives and NASP Domains.
- ___ c. Assessment of candidates during *practica* that shows they can effectively plan and carry out school psychological services.
- ___ d. Intern evaluations by field supervisors demonstrating that candidate knowledge, skills, and professional work characteristics are applied effectively in practice during internship.
- ___ e. A comprehensive, performance-based assessment of candidate abilities evaluated by faculty during internship (e.g., one or more case studies, portfolio).
- ___ f. Assessment demonstrating that candidates are able to integrate domains of knowledge and apply professional skills in delivering a range of services that positively impact children, youth, families, and other consumers. (Note: This need not be a separate assessment if it is addressed in the comprehensive performance-based assessment above).
- ___ g. Up to two optional assessments that address program objectives and NASP Domains. (e.g., comprehensive or qualifying exams, exit surveys, alumni and/or employer follow-ups, theses, case studies, simulations).

IV. Processes and methods used to assess candidates in required courses and field experiences are described in program documents

- ___ a. The program handbook describes candidate assessment methods and processes, as well as associated requirements and criteria for completion.
- ___ b. Course syllabi or similar documents address intended candidate outcomes and the processes, methods, and criteria of assessment used to determine if expectations are met in a specific enough manner to be linked to the content of NASP Domains.
- ___ c. Practica syllabi or similar documents describe assessment processes, methods, and criteria that can be linked to program goals/objectives for candidates as well as NASP Domains.
- ___ d. Internship syllabi or similar document describes assessment processes, methods and criteria that can be linked to program goals/objectives for candidates as well as NASP Domains.

V. The program documents the attainment of candidate abilities consistent with program goals/objectives and NASP Domains.

- ___ a. The program documents candidate performance on key assessment methods, including those required by NASP/NCATE.
- ___ b. The program requests and maintains state or national credentialing exam score reports, or requires candidates to provide a copy of their score reports.
- ___ c. The program collects assessments of practica and intern performance.
- ___ d. The program aggregates/summarizes assessment performance across cohorts of candidates.
- ___ e. The program documents assessment results across cohorts for the most recent three year period for purposes of NASP/NCATE review.

VI. The program documents the use of assessment results for candidate and program development and improvement

- ___ a. Processes for providing feedback to individual candidates are outlined in syllabi, field experience manuals, program handbook, and/or similar materials
- ___ b. Assessment results are regularly reviewed in relation to program goals and objectives as well as to relevant state and national standards and stimulate changes designed for the purpose of program development and improvement.
- ___ c. Documentation is maintained regarding specific program improvements/changes made in response to assessment data.

Note: It is important that programs examine the validity or “credibility” of candidate assessment methods and use such information to make decisions about their ongoing use and/or revision.