

## **Procedures for Ensuring that Key Assessments Are Fair, Accurate, Consistent, and Free of Bias**

The professional education unit has developed and implemented strategies to ensure fairness, accuracy, consistency, and freedom of bias throughout its assessment system. These strategies are organized following the suggestions provided in the SPRING 2009 NCATE UPDATE.

### **Developing and Reviewing Assessments**

- The professional education unit ensures that when it develops or reviews unit and program assessments these are linked to the unit's conceptual framework: Preparing Inquiring Educators for Diverse Settings and are aligned with institutional (the 20 Proficiencies for Initial Programs and the Six Advanced Outcomes) as well as state, and national standards.
- Faculty periodically review the rubrics used for course-imbedded assessments as well as those that are not course imbedded (e.g. assessment of field experience competencies, dispositions, etc.) in small committees and in yearly unit meetings and retreats. Rubrics are revised and clarified where needed.

### **Training of Faculty and School Partners**

- Cooperating teachers, supervisors, full-time and adjunct faculty are trained every semester on rubrics and assessments to increase consistency and reliability of raters. A high retention rate of university supervisors and adjunct faculty at the initial and advanced levels also serves to increase the reliability of the data across time.
- Full-time and adjunct faculty members have received extensive training in the use of the Teacher Work Sample (TWS). The training was provided by national experts as well as by WPU faculty and administrators.

### **Multiple Assessors**

- Multiple assessors are utilized for the following assessments at the initial level: Writing Assessment, Early Childhood Portfolio, Practicum, Student Teaching, and TWS.
- At the advanced level, multiple assessors are utilized for internships ( university and district supervisors) and all exit requirement assessments (e.g., Exit Interview in the Educational Leadership program; Portfolio in the Early Childhood, Learning Technologies, Bilingual Education, and School Library Media Specialist programs).
- Data are triangulated wherever possible to enhance the reliability of findings. For example, the assessment of the 20 Initial Competencies or of the Six Advanced Program Outcomes is part of the candidates' self-assessment reports (Program Completion Questionnaire), follow-up surveys of program graduates, employer surveys, and focus groups for both the initial and advanced programs. To insure triangulation of data at the initial certification level, the candidate, cooperating teacher, and college supervisor independently complete the 20 Competencies

Assessment at the end of the semester. A conference is held to discuss the coherence in evaluation in terms of their agreements and disagreements, at understanding the variance and the reasons for the variance, and the steps that could be taken to prevent similar rating discrepancies in the future.

- For assessments not evaluated by multiple assessors, faculty members take three samples of each assessment in the program and score the samples independently using the scoring rubric for each assessment, utilizing a form developed for this purpose. Once the two or three faculty members have scored the same samples, they come together to compare ratings. If there are inconsistencies, these are discussed and reconciled by adjusting ratings after discussion, making the rubric definitions clearer, or by changing the assessment or the assignment.

### **Alignment between Curricula and Assessments**

- Course-imbedded assessments are derived from the candidate learning outcomes for each course. The learning outcomes, in turn, are derived from the course's goals and objectives. In this way, course-imbedded assessments are directly aligned with what is taught in the courses. Examples of course-imbedded assessments include lesson plans, grades, case studies, projects, etc.
- For external assessments that are not course imbedded such as the Praxis II exam, Arts and Sciences faculty in collaboration with COE examined the content of the tests and aligned the expectations of the tests with the curriculum and with the conceptual framework and standards.

### **Candidate Knowledge about How Assessments Are Scored**

- Initial undergraduate and post-baccalaureate/MAT candidates are informed of all requirements in the education program when they attend orientation sessions and when they initially meet with their education advisors at the program level. Additionally, they are also made aware of unit and program requirements in the application process orientation sessions for admission as well as during the orientations to practicum and student teaching experiences.
- Field experience handbooks outline required assessments and rubrics. Advanced candidates are informed of the requirements upon meeting with their program advisor. Information about program requirements, the conceptual framework, dispositions expected of candidates, transition points, and key assessments are available online and through program guide sheets.
- Rubrics are used in assessing candidates' competencies throughout unit evaluations and course-embedded program assignments. Rubrics are shared with the candidates before the rubrics are used. Thus, candidates know in advance what they will be assessed on, what is expected of them, and the level of proficiency associated with each scoring decision. Rubrics that are used to assess candidates on field competencies are discussed by the director of the Office of Field Experiences

at the beginning of each semester with the student teachers, cooperating teachers, and college supervisors. Rubrics that are used for program specific assessments are discussed with the candidates each semester by the program faculty members.

- In all field work, in order to show candidate progress during a semester, candidates are assessed twice each semester – once at the midpoint and again at the end of semester with suggestions provided for remediation by the instructor, and then for a final score or grade. The competency assessment is also used as a tool throughout the practicum and student teaching experience when the university supervisor observes the candidate and provides a narrative of the experience highlighting the strengths and weaknesses using the indicators for the required competencies.

### **Avoidance of Cultural Insensitivities**

- Many of the assessments utilized by the unit are standardized, e.g. GREs, MATs, Praxis II, TWS. These assessments are regularly reviewed for cultural insensitivities and appropriateness by the agencies and organizations which develop them.
- Those assessments which are non-standardized are reviewed by the program faculty, the College Council, the Advisory Committees. Particular attention is paid during the review to the potential for bias relative to gender, disabilities, racial and ethnic identity, sexual orientation, language differences, and age.
- All faculty members as well as staff at William Paterson University are mandated to attend equity and diversity training upon being hired.