

STANDARD 2: ASSESSMENT SYSTEM AND UNIT EVALUATION

The unit has an assessment system that collects and analyzes data on the applicant qualifications, candidate and graduate performance, and unit operations to evaluate and improve the unit and its programs.

2a. Assessment System

The Unit's Assessment System, developed with input from the professional community, was initially constructed as a "plan" in 2000 based on the [conceptual framework](#) and [professional and state standards](#). Phase one involved the development of [transition points](#) to monitor candidate performance as candidates moved through their program of study. Phase two involved the development of a comprehensive and integrated set of evaluation measures at the program and unit levels to monitor candidate performance as well as manage and improve unit and program operations. Phase three involved the creation of a system of [data collection, analysis, and dissemination](#) for the purpose of improving candidate performance, strengthening program delivery, and guiding decision-making at all levels. Phase four involved the [analysis](#) of sources of bias in assessment procedures as well as working to ensure ongoing consistency, accuracy, and fairness in data collection and analysis.

The unit has worked diligently to create a strong foundation for the assessment system. Over the years, the unit has matured and become more sophisticated in understanding and determining what data are needed and valued for ongoing improvement. Clearly, we have pockets of excellence within the assessment system as well as areas where development continues. The unit clearly recognizes the complexity of assessment at the candidate, program, and unit levels and understands that a robust assessment system at an institution this large will take years to plan, develop, implement, and refine. When the institution was recently involved in their 2007 [self-study](#) for regional accreditation with the [Higher Learning Commission](#) of North Central Accreditation, the College of Education played a major role in the assessment and leadership efforts.

As called for in the 2000 Assessment Plan, a standing [Assessment Committee](#) was constituted to oversee assessment within the unit and to coordinate assessment practices among programs. The Director of Assessment and Accreditation, a full-time position in the unit, brings proposed policy and practice changes to the Assessment Committee. These changes may be initiated at the program level, department level, or from the committee level such as the [Teacher Education Council](#), consisting of faculty from the Arts and Sciences as well as Professional Education. Because the Assessment Committee is representative of initial and advanced programs within the departmental structure, feedback is thus obtained from all faculty and staff members within the unit. Once proposed changes are passed in the Assessment Committee, the changes are brought to the [NCATE Steering Committee](#). From there, the Dean consults with the [Dean's Advisory Committee](#) (made up of chairs and center directors) for final discussion prior to implementation. In this way, all changes in the assessment process are thoroughly reviewed and evaluated by departmental representatives and chairs. The [Unit Operations Survey](#) also serves as a formal structure to obtain ongoing data from candidates on the Unit Assessment System.

The Director of Assessment and Accreditation also oversees the efforts of graduate students assigned to the tasks associated with data collection, assists with the writing of assessment reports, and is responsible for dissemination of data to the unit. In 2006, a [process](#) was also developed through which department and program representatives are able to provide feedback to

the Director of Assessment and Accreditation and the Assessment Committee as to how data are used or to indicate gaps in data collection. The unit has provided ample resources for assessment, including full reassigned time for the Assessment Director, 25 percent reassigned time for graduate coordinators to focus on assessment and related activities, as well as reassigned time for a faculty member for the purpose of analyzing and reporting follow-up data. In addition, a data architect and two to four graduate assistantships per semester have been allocated to assessment and development and refinement of the unit data system.

Unit Coherence

The assessment system was established based on the unit's conceptual framework as well as state and professional standards. Coherence is demonstrated through an extensive [alignment system](#) beginning with course outcomes and ending with performance assessments, employer surveys, and follow-up studies with candidates and cooperating teachers. A review of the [syllabi](#) illustrates how course outcomes and assessments are aligned with the conceptual framework and professional and state standards. Follow-up studies, employer surveys, cooperating teacher surveys, and performance assessments are also aligned with the conceptual framework and use the INTASC Principles, NBPTS Propositions, CACREP Standards or other appropriate professional standards as the foundation for assessment.

Key Assessments

The [Key Assessments Inventory](#) provides a blueprint of key assessments employed, level of analysis (unit or program), and a timetable outlining when assessments are administered and data are disseminated. Obviously, programs differ in their approach to assessment; however, key assessments are utilized across programs to provide unit data. When possible, data are disseminated at the unit level but disaggregated to provide data at the program level. Unit data are reported on the College of Education website for access by candidates, school partners, and other public constituents. To avoid unhealthy comparisons, program data are disseminated in hard copy at the program level.

- Scores on the Praxis I Pre-Professional Skills Test (PPST) are collected on each prospective candidate prior to admission to programs within the unit. [Data](#) on program completers are accumulated and disseminated annually. [Data](#) from Praxis II – Principles of Learning and Teaching (PLT) and Praxis II – Content Tests are also collected, analyzed, and disseminated annually within the unit.
- Over the past five years, the unit has collected three versions of a performance-based instrument used as a summative assessment in student teaching. The original version of the instrument addressed nine of the 10 INTASC Principles. A newer version, instituted in 2002, includes all 10 of the INTASC Principles as items. Finally, as reliability and validity assessments of the instrument suggested a ceiling effect, a new 11-item [performance-based instrument](#) was developed. This instrument has been employed since 2005. Both cooperating and supervising teachers complete performance-based instruments on candidates during student teaching, allowing a comparative analysis. Performance-based [data](#) are collected each semester and disseminated in the fall (even years).
- Programs at the advanced level or for other school professionals have identified major assessments within their [transition points](#). Because programs at the graduate level are quite unique, data are not aggregated at the unit level. All programs conduct systematic assessments of content knowledge and performance in field or clinical experiences when appropriate. In addition, all programs conduct [follow-up studies](#) and most graduate

programs have advisory boards that provide informative feedback on candidate performance.

- A [Self-Report Instrument](#), organized around the INTASC Principles, is collected every semester as teacher candidates complete their student teaching experience. Originally the self-report instrument was administered as a mail survey; however, over the past four semesters, the survey has been collected at a required professional development day (targeting student teachers and graduate interns) ensuring close to 100 percent participation. The [data](#) are collected, entered into the data system, and analyzed annually; however, dissemination is conducted every other year (odd years). Data are also disaggregated for programs with 10 or more completers. In addition, candidates are mailed the self-report instrument at two and five-year intervals as a long-term follow-up.
- A [Cooperating Teacher Questionnaire](#), also designed to sample INTASC knowledge, skills, and dispositions, is distributed each semester and analyzed annually. The return rate is typically quite high and the data collected provide important feedback to the unit. These [data](#) are disseminated at the unit and program levels every other academic year (odd years).
- Two versions of an [Employer Survey](#) have been used over the past five years. One survey was developed based on the INTASC Principles; the other based on the Conceptual Framework. Data from employer surveys are collected spring semester and disseminated fall semester (odd years).
- In the past year, a [Unit Operations Survey](#) was developed and piloted twice. This tool is designed to assess the efficacy of our activities in the unit to support the acquisition of desired knowledge, skills, and dispositions within our learning environment, programs, support offices, field and clinical experiences, and other unit operations. As a result of our successful pilot process, [data](#) on unit operations will be collected, analyzed, and disseminated in the fall (odd years).
- Small scale [Reliability and Validity Studies](#) are conducted on a rotating schedule at the unit and program level and on request.
- During the past two annual cycles (starting in 2006), data have been organized by the [Office of Clinical Experiences](#) on two aspects of candidate performance. First, we have looked systematically at [success rates](#) in student teaching and graduate capstone practica (2004-2007). Reasons for leaving student teaching have been examined with an eye toward identifying outcome issues (e.g., problems with discipline) and process issues (e.g., advisement problems) within transition points that may affect success in capstone experiences. A second relatively new effort is more properly tied to Standard 3 (Clinical and Field Experiences) and Standard 4 (Diversity). Specifically, we have analyzed data related to the [diversity of placements](#) to ensure that all candidates experience a diverse field or clinical experience.

Transition Points

Every program in the unit has established clear [transition points](#) centered around the general components of admission, prior to clinical experience, exit from clinical experience, program completion, and follow-up. The unit has worked to “live” their transition points and actually use the different decision points as benchmarks for candidates to move through the program.

Individual candidates are tracked through the implementation of the transition points at the program level. For example, if a candidate does not meet the requirements to enter their clinical experience component, she/he is not placed and is required to continue to try to meet the established criteria through remedial work or counseled out of the profession. Candidates at both the initial and advanced levels perform well on major assessments as described in Standard One.

Assessment Procedures

The unit is committed to ensuring that assessment procedures are fair, accurate, consistent, and free of bias. The process in terms of the development of assessment instruments at the unit level, in part, is a measure of validity of instruments. No tool is employed until departmental representatives have approved the items as reflecting practices associated with the standards set by NCATE, INTASC, or other accrediting agencies or professional organizations.

The numerical internal consistency reliability of all feedback instruments is reported (a) on a unit-wide basis and (b) at the programmatic level when multiple items are employed in assessing constructs. For direct observation instruments (primarily the performance-based instrument described above), both reliability and validity are evaluated via correlating cooperating teacher and university supervisor data. In addition, an overall report ([Reliability and Validity Report](#)) on bias, reliability, and validity was produced and disseminated fall 2007.

Results suggest that the major assessments used within the unit tend to be reasonably reliable, though the reliability of some scales is probably influenced by the finding that instruments have proven to be somewhat univocal. However, given the requirements of accrediting agencies, the configuration of institutional standards implied by our conceptual model, and the national and professional standards, a reasonable level of validity has been documented.

Unit Operations

The unit uses several assessment and evaluation instruments to manage and improve the operations and programs of the unit. At the institutional level, the unit uses the National Survey of Student Engagement ([NSSE](#)) that is collected every other year. The instrument measures operations in the following domains: Level of Academic Challenge, Active and Collaborative Learning, Student-Faculty Interaction, Enriching Educational Experiences, and Supportive Campus Environment. Data are disaggregated to the college level and disseminated within the unit. Data on enrollment trends and projected job growth are also collected at the institutional level through extensive work with the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems ([NCHEMS](#)). A new [Graduating Senior Survey](#) has also been implemented at the institutional level and disaggregated to the college level providing important feedback to guide decision-making within the unit.

Because the NSSE instrument did not match perfectly with conceptualizations about unit operations, a [Unit Operations Survey](#) was developed and piloted during the 2006-2007 academic year. The instrument, approved for piloting and for administration via the process described above, is a 28-item quadrant-analysis scale, whereby candidates rate the importance of operations and the quality of services in the unit. An initial report was developed during summer 2007 and disseminated fall 2007. Because of low returns, the decision was made to collect further data sets via random sampling of courses taken by (a) seniors, and (b) graduate students in capstone methods courses. The domains measured via the Unit Operations Survey include: Interactions Within the Unit, Advisement Experiences, Support Offices, Assessment of Candidate Performance (Assessment System), and Learning/ Information Needs.

The [Evaluation, Promotion, and Tenure Procedures](#) provide a strong foundation within the Unit Assessment System for faculty evaluation and professional development. All faculty develop Professional Development Plans (PDP) that are systematically reviewed by colleagues and administrators. Faculty members also develop a Professional Development Report (PDR) that is submitted for review and comment. Finally, the student complaint process, monitored and implemented by the associate deans in the colleges, provide oversight of issues and disputes that arise as candidates progress through the transition points.

2b. Data Collection, Analysis, and Evaluation

The unit has worked diligently to establish a system of data collection that provides information that is valuable for evaluating candidate, program, and unit performance. However, over the past seven years, the unit discovered that it was collecting too much data and was not being as selective about the types of data collected and the impact of the dissemination schedule. Therefore, adjustments have been made in the data collection and dissemination schedule within the Unit Assessment System to better serve the internal needs of the unit.

The data collected within the Assessment System are illustrated in a document titled [Key Assessments Inventory](#). Candidates are assessed through formative and summative assessments. Data are collected from a variety of sources including candidates, cooperating teachers, principals, superintendents, university supervisors, faculty, counselors, and national testing services. Data collected on a semester-by-semester basis are typically reported at the unit and program levels on at least a bi-yearly basis. These reports include data sorted into tables and figures and include a written interpretive narrative to guide unit members. Some data, such as Praxis I and Praxis II information are disseminated annually. The dissemination system within the Unit Assessment System was established to ensure that members of the unit receive data on candidate and unit performance annually.

[Data on our off-campus programs](#) are also collected and disseminated through a formal analysis. A [research study](#) was recently conducted on the North Branch Partnership with Anoka-Ramsey Community College and North Branch School District. Findings suggested that candidate performance in the program was equal to candidates' on-campus accomplishments in most cases and superior in others. The Portal Partnership between Special Education (SCSU) and Anoka-Ramsey Community College will be assessed similarly when candidates come close to the end of the project.

To illustrate how the Unit Assessment System has been evaluated and modified on an ongoing basis, unit-wide surveys have traditionally been distributed at the end of each semester by mail. Data are then entered into statistical programs, analyzed, reported, and disseminated on the schedule specified in the [Key Assessments Inventory](#). However, consumer feedback and low return rates have dictated changes in procedures over the past two academic years. For example, due to declining return rates with mail surveys, the self-report instrument is now collected at a required (for student teachers) professional development day event. This change has resulted in a return rate of close to 100 percent. Another compelling example is the decision to collect the [Unit Operations Survey](#) within randomly selected capstone courses during the last half of each semester rather than using a traditional mail survey. [Cooperating Teacher Surveys](#) continue to be mailed, as do [follow-up studies](#) with candidates and employers. Praxis I and Praxis II data are delivered to the unit by Educational Testing Service (ETS); the data are assembled and delivered to unit representatives during November each academic year. Finally, other data are compiled in the units where they are collected (e.g., Office of Clinical Experiences) and disseminated through the defined process.

The responsibility for data collection, analysis, and dissemination is shared between the Director of Assessment and Accreditation and the Associate Dean. Reassigned time has also been provided to a faculty member to serve as a research analyst. In addition, two to four graduate assistants are employed to manage data.

The unit incorporates a variety of information technologies to manage the data within the Assessment System including the ISRS System, a data management system within the MnSCU System. Data from follow-up studies, unit operations, and performance-based assessments are stored on an extensive and comprehensive database stored on a server within the College of Education. Praxis data are entered into the ISRS System and becomes part of each candidate's permanent record. The Office of Clinical Experiences uses a data system specifically designed to track the diversity of candidate placements as well as monitor candidate performance. The unit experimented with an external vendor for collection of both formative and summative data on student teaching performance; however, several challenges emerged that could not be resolved. As a result, the unit continues to develop alternative internal routes to the system described above.

Finally, the Associate Dean is responsible for maintaining a system for tracking, analyzing, and reporting student complaints. This system was initiated in 2006 and reported for the first time in 2007.

2c. Use of Data for Program Improvement

The unit is committed to using data to make decisions at the candidate, program, and unit levels and, as a result, improving candidate performance and student learning. Assessment data clearly indicate that candidate performance is strong and the data collected provides opportunities for growth at the faculty, program and unit levels. As described earlier, data are shared with faculty, staff, candidates, advisory boards, administrators, and school partners to demonstrate that the unit has a deep interest in the use of data for improvement. At the unit level, data reports are typically posted on the College of Education website and provided in hard copy to the [Assessment Committee](#), [Teacher Education Council](#), departments and/or programs, as well as the dean and provost. At the program level, data reports are not posted on the website but are provided to programs and/or departments in hard copy format. Data reports are typically discussed at the program and/or department level but may be discussed at the unit level through appropriate committees (Dean's Advisory Council, Teacher Education Council) if unit changes need to be proposed. The dean is responsible for providing institutional data that are disaggregated at the college level and works with the [Dean's Advisory Council](#) to analyze the results and makes appropriate recommendations for changes at the unit level.

Based on discussions in the unit during 2005 and 2006, it was agreed that a more formal system for recording, disseminating, and receiving feedback on data reports should be instituted. This [process](#) was approved by the Assessment Committee and the Dean's Advisory Committee during spring 2007 and put into practice during the summer. A [Use of Data Form](#) is attached to all reports disseminated within the unit and used by faculty in data analysis. The form is then submitted to the Assessment Director for documentation.

Many examples of the use of formal and informal data exist and were presented in the program review documents that were submitted to the Minnesota Board of Teaching. Several examples of changes at the unit level are highlighted:

- The [Praxis Center](#) was created after a formal analysis of data indicated that candidates needed support to prepare for national exams.
- Analysis of the data related to return rates of the unit's [self-report instrument](#) dictated a change in data collection procedures within the Assessment System.
- Analysis of the data available from the use of the performance-based assessment [instrument](#) resulted in modifications and revisions over the past five years. A new rubric and indicators of performance were added to the instrument.
- Feedback from the Dean's Student Advisory Committees (undergraduate and graduate) indicated a need to improve the classroom learning environment. These data were forwarded to the [Space and Technology Committee](#) and a COE Renovation Plan was developed and is being implemented.
- A survey of faculty regarding the use of technology resulted in an institutional commitment to upgrading classrooms to ensure they were equipped with technology to enhance pedagogy.
- An analysis of the [National Survey of Student Engagement](#) (NSSE) data at the college level indicated the need to develop a [Unit Operations Survey](#) to provide more precise information to better inform the unit. This analysis also was instrumental in the development of Student Engagement Funds, available to departments to sponsor activities to promote the involvement of faculty and staff with candidates.
- An analysis of enrollment data trends and an informal NCATE Scan resulted in the movement to reassigned time (25%) for graduate program coordinators.

Summary: The unit is systematic in the use of data and has established a system to use data to make positive changes at the program, department, and college levels. Data are shared with candidates, faculty, and staff to promote reflection and to move toward a system of data-driven decision-making.

Summary of Standard 2: The Unit Assessment System serves as the foundation for measuring our quality of performance at the candidate, program, and unit level. The Assessment System provides a blueprint for evaluating our current practice and planning for our future, which ultimately helps us determine if we are indeed "living" the conceptual framework.

The unit is particularly proud of the comprehensive data system that has been developed. Even though we consider the system "a work in progress", we continue to refine and improve all aspects within the system. We are also pleased with three sizable research efforts related to assessment that have been undertaken within the unit. First, Davison-Jenkins (a current faculty member in the unit) and Koeppen (2007) published a book critically reviewing practice in assessment of dispositions. Second, Hoover and Ackerman (2006) presented a data-based paper on the validity of dispositional data as the measurement of dispositions at a national conference. Third, as a result of a Teacher Quality Enhancement Grant, we have conducted significant research related to the impact on student learning from a co-teaching perspective that has received national attention and recognition.