

Section

2

The Assessment Task

Section Overview: In this section, include a copy of the most recent version of your performance assessment task including directions to candidates and stimuli, e.g. anything the candidate reads, reviews, analyzes, when engaging in the task. Include evaluation criteria for the task, e.g. rubrics or scoring protocols and any benchmark candidate performances that illustrate performance levels for each content area. If your workgroup developed assessment for more than one content area, provide examples of performances that represent each performance levels for the assessment in each content area. Also include prior drafts of your task as well as any reviews of these drafts.

Include in this section:

- A current version of your assessment task with all accompanying directions and stimuli.

See Appendix C.

- A summary of all reviews of drafts of your tasks, including purpose, directions, reviewer qualifications, feedback and changes.

The committee repeatedly reviewed the numerous drafts of the task via email and meetings. Samples of the commentary and changes may be found in the email and agendas attached in Appendix A and in Appendix D, E, F, G, H, and I, drafts of the task from August to February. In our meetings we drew on the individual expertise of our committee members, already discussed in the previous section, in content, social science methods, and pedagogy. We also evaluated the task via pilots.

Included as inserts are, as requested, all drafts of the task. It should be noted, however, that not all of the drafts inserted were piloted. What is included is a copy of the drafts created from the beginning of the process. The first piloted draft is Appendix G, October 9, 2002. Appendices D, E, and F, illustrate the development of the task once the workgroup began actually developing the document itself.

Drafts of the First Pilot Task

The first draft, Appendix D, from August, 2002, was the committee's first attempt to articulate in document form the goals for the assessment task and the procedures we expected teacher candidates to follow. The August draft highlights the place of the assessment task in Quinnipiac University's Division of Education, and identifies key components of the Framework and CCT that we ask teacher candidates to address in the task. In August we

emphasized the need to evaluate skills that will lead to excellent teaching and the need for teacher candidates to be familiar with the CCT and the Framework. The committee divided its goals for the task into 7 subheadings: 1) familiarity with Framework and CCT; 2) evaluation of content knowledge and research skills; 3) ability to develop unit plan outlines and lesson plans; 4) ability to develop assignments and the means to assess those assignments; 5) ability to recognize and plan for individual learning styles; 6) the importance of NSSST commentary on “Social Studies and the Nature of Learning”; and 7) the importance of reflecting on the research and planning process. After articulating these goals, this draft set up the basic template for the work to be turned in by the teacher candidate. We asked for a unit outline organized around a concept or theme, based on an assigned topic. We originally planned for a task that would take approximately a week for the teacher candidate to complete, and asked for a 5 day outline of a unit, one full lesson plan, and a journal or reflective piece of writing.

The second draft, Appendix E, from September 10, 2002, shows considerable honing of the outline of goals. The number of goals is reduced to six, consolidates some of the earlier material, and breaks down each component for greater clarity and readability for the teacher candidate. The first goal in the original draft, familiarity with the Framework and CCT has been removed from the list, but its presence is felt in nearly all the other goals—it hasn’t been removed from the task, but instead is articulated throughout the document. Each of the remaining goals is broken down into at least two components that identify what the teacher candidate will demonstrate more specifically. For instance, item I. explains that the teacher candidate will “use appropriate content knowledge to guide instruction.” This item is broken down into item A. “use existing knowledge” and item B. “demonstrate the ability to research and locate material.”

The second draft also includes a new section meant to give the teacher candidate more specific context for his or her particular topic. It gives the teacher candidate background for the students they are to prepare the unit and lesson plans for, identifies the task in a short paragraphs, informs the teacher candidate of who his or her audience is, and suggests procedures that include following the template and self-assessing. In this draft the idea of having the project completed in one week has been dropped—by this point it has become clear that the project will take several weeks if the teacher candidate is also engaged in coursework. This draft also has a more elaborate template that requests more information, such as a bibliography, and clarification about the requirements for a complete lesson plan. This draft is also still rough, and shows the need to continue to articulate the purpose and process of the task.

The third draft, Appendix F, from September 11, 2002, maintains many of the characteristics of the previous draft. However, it has a more clearly articulated introductory section that identifies the purpose of the assessment task in terms of its role in teacher preparation more generally, and how the task fits into the larger philosophy of education and teacher preparation in the Division of Education at Quinnipiac University. This draft also breaks down the overarching principles into more subcomponents—this was part of an effort to make it clear to the teacher candidate how he or she could best satisfy each of these areas.

The fourth draft, Appendix G, from October 9, 2002, is **the version that was used for our first pilot**. It included a model task that demonstrated the workgroup's efforts to understand what it had proposed and operated as an additional template for the teacher candidates since they could not, at this time, be presented with a workable rubric or other self-assessment materials. In this draft the workgroup also requested that for each of the five days, in the five day unit outline, that the teacher candidate include adjustments for each day for a group that is challenged, specifically that is reading below grade level, has less developed reasoning skills, and deals better with the concrete. In addition, the draft shows correction of errors, such as a numbering problem, as well as polishing touches such as the inclusion of clip art and proper formatting. We also included the specific topic—"World Religions"—and grade level—7th—as well as an actual deadline and contact information for the completion of the pilot.

Revised Draft for Second Pilot

The fifth draft, Appendix H, from December 19, 2002, includes changes based upon the piloting of the October 9, 2002, version, and also is **the version that was used for our second pilot**. In it the workgroup clarified definitions of constructivist and integrative teaching. Some of the most important changes in this version include:

--the addition of a comprehensive integrity statement that is meant to emphasize the place of integrity in one's role as a student, in one's role as a teacher, and in one's responsibility to model academic rigor and general integrity. With that in mind the statement emphasizes the general themes of academic integrity emphasized at Quinnipiac University. In addition, it acknowledges the role of collaboration in the work of teachers, and attempts to help teacher candidates manage their resources and attributions properly.

--reorganization of the Template to clarify expectations. What was item II. Unit Outline became item II. Unit Outline and item III. Five Class Session Outline.

--modification of expectations in II. Unit Outline (in the previous draft from October this material was found in section II. Unit Outline A. Unit Themes and Goals). The workgroup opted to divide II. Unit Outline into 3 subheadings. We reduced the number of content standards to be addressed in the unit, having found through the pilot that teacher candidates included far too many content standards than they could possibly address completely. In the new template we simply asked them to focus their efforts. We removed the request for an essential question and integrative and constructivist themes—we found that these items seemed to confuse the first pilot group and that they weren't important for our purposes, especially since we maintained our request for a goal or goals for the unit. Finally, we requested a detailed content outline from the teacher candidates. This request resulted from our experience with the first pilot group as well. Specifically, the workgroup found that teacher candidates in the first pilot provided interesting lists or condensed summaries of content to be addressed, but left us unconvinced about whether or not they actually understand the material. The new item, II. C. Content outline, was meant to address this issue.

--a change regarding adjustments for learning styles. We decided, after reviewing the pilot, that asking for adjustments for each day of the 5-day outline was confusing to the candidates

and unusual for the planning process a teacher ordinarily goes through. For that reason we instead required a brief discussion of the different learning styles addressed in the unit (item III. B). This approach keeps the issue of learning styles before the teacher candidate and makes it an issue for reflection in addition to planning. It also furthers the workgroup goal to be sure candidates are aware of pedagogical methods to address various learning styles.

--in this draft we also elaborated on some of the items meant for reflection. Specifically we asked for clearer reflection about challenged learners, defining them more clearer to help teacher candidates in their reflection.

--finally, in this draft we included a checklist and rubric to aid teacher candidates in their self-assessment.

Revisions after Second Pilot

The sixth draft, Appendix I, February 11, 2003, reflects the workgroup revisions that followed the second pilot group. In it we clarified some language in the introductory section of the task so that the teacher candidate may better understand the purpose of the assessment task and the definitions for key terms, as well as relevant reference works. We also made a few very substantial changes:

--the workgroup added item VI. in the introductory section. Upon reviewing the pilots we noted some concerns about grammar and writing skills. This subsection highlights the importance of writing clearly and well, and the necessity of clear, correct documentation in academic work. An additional section was added to the rubric and checklist to mirror the changes in the document.

--the workgroup expanded the definition of challenged learners (defined in the template, section III. B.) to include not only students who are below grade level, but also those that are ahead of their grade level. After discussion of the pilot 2 work, we determined that teacher candidates and teachers often find both groups challenging (and challenged) and that it is important to pay attention to both groups.

Final Revisions Informed by TBA Consulting (Appendix B)

The seventh and final draft, Appendix C, reflects workgroup revisions following the receipt of comments and observations from TBA Consulting. This document provided a number of detailed comments and observations, many of which the workgroup implemented in the final draft. Most significantly, the new draft:

--clearly labels each portion of the task as “General Information for Teacher Candidates,” “Specific Instructions for Teacher Candidates,” “Template for Teacher Candidates,” “Checklist for Teacher Candidates (optional),” and “Rubric for Self-Assessment” (addresses Appendix B, TBA Comments and Observations, p. 4, item 1)

--incorporates specific references to competencies addressed throughout “General Information for Teacher Candidates” (addresses Appendix B, TBA Comments and Observations, p. 4, item 2.c.)

--clarifies the nature of the challenged group, identifies the number of students in the hypothetical class, clarifies the guiding concept versus theme throughout the document, and strengthens the wording about the audience and purpose (addresses Appendix B, TBA Comments and Observations, p. 7). On this page TBA Consulting also notes several strengths in the clarity of the task and suggests that the Integrity Statement might be used as a model for other workgroups. We support this suggestion.

--clarifies the use of the checklist by asking only if items are present or absent and noting that its use is optional and the purpose of the attached rubric (an optional self-assessment tool) (addresses Appendix B, TBA Comments and Observations, p. 7, 5.a. and 5.b. and p. 10)

--maintains clearer language about the content outline. Our second pilot did suggest that clearer instructions would be useful, as TBA Consulting also noted. This changes were introduced in the previous draft (addresses Appendix B, TBA Comments and Observations, p. 7, II. C.).

--identifies the template more clearly, and requests that bibliographic materials be presented in MLA format (addresses Appendix B, TBA Comments and Observations, p. 9, III. D. and III. E.).

--pays more attention to the language in a number of areas. Thus, for instance, the document carefully distinguishes between the teaching process—in which the teacher candidate does not engage in this task—and the process of planning for teaching and classroom interaction (suggested in many comments in Appendix B, TBA Comments and Observations).

--is much more streamlined. The TBA report suggested that the rubric was very complicated, and suggested reducing the number of categories. For this to be successful, the workgroup determined it also needed to stream the introductory section. We thus divided the General Information and along with it the rubric into 3 distinct subsections: Content Knowledge, Pedagogical Knowledge, and Social Science Practitioner Skills. We have listed relevant items under each, and use the General Information as a source of information for the candidate. The rubric is keyed directly to the items in General Information.

--still include a checklist, keyed to the items in the checklist. The workgroup understands that not all institutions or candidates may find this checklist useful. We consider it an optional tool that some may find useful, while others may not.

--TBA Consulting made many excellent comments on the rubric, many of which suggested conclusions similar to conclusions already reached by the workgroup. However, in other cases the comments helped the workgroup tremendously in its effort to improve the rubric. It now has measurable, clear language throughout, with each level clearly distinguished from the other. It also has less redundancy. The rubric now requests one score for each category.

--in addition to clarification of the rubric, the workgroup has developed an Individual Scoring Summary (insert 13) and a Scoring Summary and Decision Guide (insert 14). These forms will guide scorers and Quinnipiac University faculty and administrators in the decision-making process that comes with the use of the assessment task.

--the rubric does maintain its category of Outstanding, despite some reservations expressed by TBA Consulting. This is a conscious choice made by the workgroup, which believes that although teacher candidates can not be expected to meet the standard of outstanding in each category, they do need to see the outline of outstanding performance so that they may see what qualifies as outstanding work. This is part of the teaching tool of the assessment task, and also makes the instrument more valid. We discussed this approach at one of the break-out sessions at the December Title II meeting in New Britain and found widespread support for this approach to rubric construction. Our workgroup's decision in this area is also supported by the Dean of the Division of Education at Quinnipiac University.

The changes in the task itself had no substantial impact on the product that the teacher candidates would produce. We thus were able to use the products from the second pilot to test the reorganized rubric. We used that meeting to further improve the language of the rubric, but overall found the new rubric worked well. It is, in our view, a successful, well-tested rubric.

Copies of email correspondence, meeting agendas, and meeting summaries can be found in Appendix A, and of observations and comments from TBA Consulting can be found in the Appendix B.

- Criteria or scoring protocols used to evaluate candidate performance on the assessment task. (If your benchmark performances are not from the current version of your task, please make a notation of this.)

We used an assessment list/checklist keyed to the template for the task and a rubric keyed to the general and specific expectations for the task.

See section below.

The benchmarks included are from an earlier, but very similar, version of the task. Changes made since the pilot have not altered the overall organization and structure of the product submitted by the teacher candidate. Instead, introductory material has been adjusted to clarify the general purpose of the assessment and specific instructions have been adjusted to clarify the expectations for each portion of the task.

- Benchmark candidate performances that illustrate performance levels.

See Appendix J, K, and L.

- Copies of previous drafts of your assessment task with the approximate date of when the task was developed.

See Appendix D, E, F, G, H, and I.

- Copies of all the rubrics you used to evaluate your task. Please date the rubrics.

See Appendix M. The final version of the rubric is included in the final version of the task, Appendix C.

- Samples of candidate performances that represent each performance level in each content area for which you will use your assessment task.

See Appendix J, K, and L.