

Section

3

Task Development

Section Overview: In this section, provide supporting documentation and a narrative describing how you worked to develop:

- The **validity** of your task;
- The **reliability** of your task; and,
- **rubrics** for evaluating and scoring your task.

Begin this section with a summary of all pilot testing of the instrument with content experts or with candidates, including quantitative data (who, when, how many). Then address the issues of validity, reliability, and rubric development.

Validity

When addressing the question of validity, include information about the connection of the task to standards, the candidate's readiness for the assessment, the task's internal consistency, accuracy, and fairness.

As the Quinnipiac University workgroup strove to develop a valid and authentic task, we carefully considered the expectations for teacher candidates when they enter student teaching. We decided that we wanted to be sure that teacher candidates regularly use the standards as a guide to the process of develop unit and lesson outlines. We also wanted to understand how well students learned methods in their coursework, and how well they could apply those lessons to practical, real preparation for entering the classroom for student teaching. Thus we originally intended that our task come after students have taken both methods courses.

However, after the piloting process the workgroup now believes that the task might best be used as a tool throughout the methods courses as part of the emphasis to teacher candidates that they should continually return to the practical application of their coursework. In this way the teacher candidates not only will be able to continually apply the task to their coursework, but also will provide genuine and authentic preparation for the process of developing unit and lesson plans in student teaching.

We struggled to maintain the internal consistency of our task by keeping focus on the purpose of the task: to evaluate teacher candidate ability to research content, use social science methods, and develop coherent and aligned unit and lesson plans. Because of this focus we considered, but rejected, the possibility of adding a component in which the teacher candidate evaluated student work. We felt strongly that such an evaluation of student work, as important as it is in teacher preparation, was not part of what we were trying to evaluate. In addition, we discussed this component with Dean Dubea; she convinced us that the grading of student work is addressed in other areas of teacher preparation work at Quinnipiac University, and need not

be addressed in our task. However, we did add other components to our task, in particular the requirement that teacher candidates prepare materials for learners who are challenged in different ways, and for different learning styles. This approach is completely consistent with the research and social science methods that are the central focus of the task.

The task is fair because it builds directly on content and methods in advanced education courses. It is accurate because it represents an authentic real world experience for the teacher candidates.

Include in this section:

- The specific outcomes you are measuring with your assessment task.

The task measures teacher candidate ability to research social science content, to organize that content through goals and concepts that match expectations in the framework, and to develop coherent and aligned unit and lesson plans.

- The connection between these outcomes and standards or indicators. Attach any alignment charts or matrices you used in your work.

Our task measures fundamental skills that are needed for outstanding teaching in the social sciences. These skills include a fundamental understanding of the nature of social science research and the application of that research to a specific research topic. We also worked to ensure that the material that students were producing as part of their lesson plans was aligned with the Common Core of Teaching and the Connecticut Social Studies Curriculum Framework.

- A description of the steps your workgroup took to align the assessment task with the candidate learning outcomes you identified.

We worked to develop a scoring rubric that provided a clear and consistent assessment of the work that was produced by our teacher candidates. Since our focus was to assess how well our teacher candidates had been prepared in their undergraduate and graduate courses in both the methods and research skills that are at the foundation of the social sciences, our efforts to revise the task focused on making sure that the teacher candidates understood that the core of the task was the research they would need to do in order to prepare effective lesson plans.

A second area of concern for us was to ensure that students had adequate preparation in developing effective lesson plans, and in fulfilling the requirements of the teaching standards established by the CCT and the Framework. These areas were also a focus of many of our discussions as we tried to ensure that the task would measure the effectiveness of student planning effectively. Based on our pilots, we are confident that the task we have created does

ensure that students engage in creative and accurate lesson planning that is aligned with the CCT and the Framework.

- The stage in the candidate's preparation at which you plan to use your assessment task.

The MAT Program will determine the final use of the assessment task. However, we created it to be used in conjunction with Methods courses and before teacher candidates begin student teaching.

- The ways in which your assessment task takes into consideration the candidate's level of preparation, i.e., you don't expect them to demonstrate knowledge or skill at something they haven't had the opportunity to learn.

The task is aligned with what teacher candidates learn in their methods and content courses. It focuses on content research skills, the development of themes, the development of learning objectives, and the construction of unit and lesson plan outlines. These are precisely the goals of their graduate education to this point.

- The opportunities candidates had to learn the skills or content assessed by your task, i.e. where in their preparation did they learn the knowledge and skill required to successfully complete your assessment task.

Our task measures candidate performance based on content taught in the following Quinnipiac University courses:

- ED 570: Interdisciplinary Teaching for Middle Grades I
- ED 571: Interdisciplinary Teaching for Middle Grades II
- ED 524: Secondary Education Methods I and
- ED 505: Secondary Education Methods II: Teaching History/Social Studies

The task also assesses the general knowledge of content and skills that should have been developed in the teacher candidate's undergraduate and graduate courses in the social sciences and humanities.

Thus, the task measures their ability to research content and pedagogy and to organize unit and lesson plans, the very things that their coursework has emphasized to this point.

- Evidence you have about the clarity of the task. What steps did you take to ensure the task was clear? Did you interview candidates after they took the assessment task? Did you give a questionnaire to pilot participants? Did members of your workgroup take

the assessment yourselves? Did you have people outside of your workgroup review the task for clarity?

Each member of the committee reviewed the task multiple times. In addition, TBA Consulting, in its observations and comments received by the workgroup in February, agreed that the task directions were very clear. The consultant suggested changes that would enhance clarity in other areas, and those changes have been made.

One person was responsible for implementing changes in the draft to maintain clarity and clear voice.

We invited recent graduates to a dinner. These graduates gave us tremendously valuable feedback on the clarity of the task (although they found little problems with the clarity, but instead made suggestions about having candidates complete the task along with other coursework).

The workgroup constructed a model, which was the effective equivalent of taking the task ourselves.

As mentioned above, TBA Consulting and recent graduates also reviewed the task and commented on it in various ways.

- The steps you took to ensure that candidates knew how their responses were going to be evaluated.

Evaluation is addressed in the introductory material to the task and in the self-assessment materials we present to the candidates. The task itself clearly outlines the reasoning and expectations for teacher candidates, and includes references to various documents, especially frameworks and standards, that will help the candidates best understand the materials and study the issues in greater depth. We provided the first group with a model that supplemented the task outline itself; we have decided that in the future, however, a model is not necessary because a checklist and rubric will serve similar purposes. We provided the second group with this checklist list and a rubric. These clearly demonstrate how the task is to be scored.

Reliability

Include in this section:

- Explain any steps you took to establish the consistency of scores for your task.

Each member of the pilot workgroup scored pilot tasks using the rubric and the checklist. The scores were consistent and demonstrate that our scoring method is consistent.

- Explain how you trained scorers to ensure their scoring of candidate responses was consistent.

Members of the pilot workgroup are well versed in the processes of scoring with rubrics and assessment lists.

- In what ways have you examined the results from your assessment for consistency?

We compared scores and comments in each category. While everyone participated fully in the process and tracked consistency and reliability, the P.I. in particular was responsible for tracking the results. As a group we found areas for clarification in the rubric, but also found remarkable consistency in the scores.

Scoring Protocols

Include in this section:

- Describe how you initiated the development of the rubric to evaluate your task.

The workgroup outlined a rubric based upon the outline of expectations in the task and designed a checklist based upon our template for the task. Since the task was constructed with a clear outline of expectations and a clear template, following these outlines—also very clear in each pilot task we received—for the rubric and checklist was a simple and extremely effective approach.

- What role did actual candidate performances play in your rubric development?

Candidate performances helped us to clarify the structure and wording of the rubric.

Through the analysis of pilot tasks we found that following the outline of the task was an excellent method for organizing the rubric. However, we found that some language needed to be clarified and that some additional categories needed to be added to assist the scoring process. Thus, for example, regarding the teacher candidate ability to develop an appropriate assignment for the unit and lesson outline, we found that we needed to address not only the way in which the assignment is conceptualized, but also the way in which the teacher candidate is able to convey the expectations for the assignment to their students. In short, we needed to address writing and language skills as part of the assignment portion of the rubric.

We also made sure that any modifications to the task, based upon what we learned from piloting, were reflected in the revised rubric as well.

- In what ways did the development and refinement of your rubric inform revisions to your task?

As we adjusted the rubric we also adjusted the task to keep the two aligned. Thus, we decided to assess mechanical writing skills and use of language in the rubric and the task. We developed both pieces together.

- All materials used to train evaluators.
- Your plans for training evaluators.

Dean Dubea will coordinate the training of evaluators. The workgroup expects that the training will include standard experience and training with rubrics as well as a thorough review of the task and its goals. All evaluators also will need to be familiar with state and national documents that relate to middle grades and secondary education, as well as materials related to social sciences education.