

## Policy Analysis

### **Accreditation of Teacher Education in the US: An Audit Approach to Subject Assessment**

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#### **Executive summary**

The Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) was founded in 1997 as an alternative approach to accreditation of teacher education in the United States. It combines an innovative focus on student learning and an evidence-based audit method. Its review process is supported by detailed protocols, well-defined visits, a strict separation between the auditor role and the summative evaluation role, and use of scholarly standards for reliability and validity. Programs must meet standards that focus on student learning and its use for academic planning and improvement, but they select what evidence to use in making their claims. This approach has allowed programs to gather detailed evidence that is both meaningful and useful for improvement. Today, with about 100 members and nine institutions that are accredited, TEAC competes for recognition with a long-established agency, but the two organizations share a common goal of offering public assurances about the strength of teacher education programs.

## Introduction

The education of prospective teachers is important in all societies. Well-qualified teachers help ensure that a nation's youth acquire the skills and knowledge to find productive adult roles and meet future challenges. In recent decades, America's teaching force has come under scrutiny, out of concern that teachers are not well prepared and that teacher training is weak. These concerns have found expression in special commissions and reports, including a landmark report, *A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Carnegie, 1986). A decade later, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future issued a report, *What matters most: Teaching for American's future* (NCTAF, 1996) which, among its recommendations, called for accreditation of all programs of teacher education.

The preparation of teachers in the United States is primarily the responsibility of colleges and universities. The dominant pattern is one in which colleges and universities provide the content knowledge and practical experience (in cooperation with local schools), while state governments and professional associations exert external quality control. About 1,300 of the nation's 4,000 institutions of higher education offer teacher education programs. This includes private colleges that enroll fewer than 100 students in education and also large state universities where schools of education enroll 600 or more students.

States have two roles: they regulate programs and they license new teachers. All programs of teacher education must receive state "approval," by meeting the state's formal standards. Standards vary, with some states maintaining quite general requirements. Separately, each graduate must pass the state examination to become a licensed or "certified" teacher, required for employment by school systems. Again, states vary in the coverage and rigor of this exam and whether the license is required for private as well as public school teaching.

Each program also may seek accreditation, a voluntary, nongovernmental review organized by professional associations. Subject-specific accreditation is quite common in the US. More than 60 professional agencies accredit academic programs in electrical engineering, art, music, nursing, social welfare, business, medicine and other subjects. Multiple accrediting agencies exist in several fields, including business, nursing, law, and teacher education. In the past, many programs of teacher education did not seek accreditation, in part because they operated on the basis of state approval and their graduates mainly found employment within their state. Generally too, their institution had "regional" accreditation, a broader form of recognition. This pattern is changing today in teacher education, as programs grow and compete with each other and as some states now require teacher education programs to be accredited (Murray, 2005).

Two external bodies provide national-level oversight of this system of decentralized accrediting agencies. A nongovernmental umbrella organization, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), evaluates and publicly attests to the legitimacy and appropriate standards of each of the accrediting agencies that it recognizes. In addition, an advisory council -- The National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), convened by the U.S. Department of Education and assisted by a small evaluation office within the department -- applies its own evaluative process to recognize accrediting agencies. More information on these national structures can be found in El-Khawas, 2001.

Because of the voluntary nature of program accreditation, some academic fields have very high rates at which programs are accredited, while other fields have much lower rates. In fields where most programs are accredited, or where the strongest programs choose to be accredited,

accreditation status is seen as conferring status or prestige. Accreditation thus acquires an additional role – as a mark of status -- beyond its quality control role of assuring the public that a program meets external standards of quality.

Teacher education is a field in which many programs have not sought accreditation, instead relying on state approval. In 2003, about 560 of the country's 1,300 teacher education programs (43 percent) were accredited by one of the long-established accrediting bodies, primarily NCATE (the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education) and a small number with the Montessori Accreditation Council (which accredits free-standing Montessori schools). Accredited programs nevertheless account for about 80 percent of the annual supply of new teachers. In recent debates about the quality of school teachers, concerns have been voiced about whether nonaccredited programs are offering sufficient quality in their training.

## The policy problem

The Teacher Education Accreditation Council was created in 1997 in a context of lively debate on ways to improve perceived shortcomings in teacher preparation in the United States. During this period, multiple initiatives, both governmental and nongovernmental, have been competing for support and legitimacy. Since 1987, for example, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards has pioneered a system for certifying teachers. Also in 1987, a coalition of state education offices, education organizations and institutions of higher education formed INTASC (the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium), dedicated to improving the licensing and continuing education of teachers. In 2004, the US Department of Education provided financial support to the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence to develop and administer an on-line standardized test for teacher licensing. This test has already been accepted in Pennsylvania and Florida.

It also was a time when accrediting agencies were making significant changes, both to streamline requirements and to focus attention on student learning (El-Khawas, 2001). Their actions, especially those directed toward student learning, were a response to criticisms that accreditation procedures were too heavily concentrated on indirect evidence about the "capacity" of a program or institution (e.g., good faculty and facilities; responsible procedures for governance and administration) rather than actual accomplishments. Other accreditation reforms were spurred by a 1996 article by Dill, Massy, Williams and Cook that described academic audit as an attractive approach. As Ewell has remarked, this period offered "...an unparalleled opportunity to respond to growing demands that accrediting bodies pay greater attention to student learning outcomes in their review processes" (Ewell, 2001, p. 2).

While influenced by these trends, the founding of TEAC as a new accrediting agency was also a response to dissatisfaction with existing requirements for accreditation in teacher education. Several concerns came together, among them the need for an accreditation process more compatible with the characteristics of teacher preparation programs at relatively small colleges. Smaller institutions argued that NCATE's accreditation model included criteria for faculty credentials, research productivity, facilities and governance that did not fit their circumstances. In 1996, a survey by the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) among its membership (about 404 private colleges) found that most members were not satisfied with NCATE's approach. These results led to the creation of a broad-based committee to plan an alternative approach. While CIC was the sponsor, committee members included deans from three major public research institutions

(the University of Michigan, Indiana University and Iowa State University) and a public four-year college (Millersville) as well as several presidents from private colleges (Ekman, 2003).

The Teacher Education Accreditation Council thus was founded during a time of sharp debate, competing factions and differing approaches to the reform of teacher preparation. Building on several reforms, it developed an alternative approach based on an innovative audit method that emphasizes verifiable evidence for student learning. TEAC's focus on student learning, while distinctive, is similar to recently adopted approaches of other US accreditation agencies. In the late 1990s, for example, WASC, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges adopted two primary criteria for accreditation: educational effectiveness and institutional capacity.

## Content of the Instrument

Within a framework used by most US accrediting agencies, TEAC developed a detailed process to evaluate programs and decide whether to accredit them. Box 1 offers an overview of the TEAC procedures. The following description is based on TEAC's Standards and Guidelines, available on the TEAC website. To be considered for accreditation, a program notifies TEAC of its interest and submits an eligibility application, attesting that it meets five eligibility requirements:

- the program is committed to TEAC's goals and quality principles;
- the program faculty understand that TEAC may disclose the member's accreditation status;
- the program faculty will provide any information that TEAC may require;
- the institution giving the program has regional accreditation or its equivalent; and
- the program's graduates are eligible for the state's professional teaching license. Once eligible, a program has "candidate" status for five years. It arranges a schedule with TEAC for preparation of a self-study (called an Inquiry Brief) and a review of the evidence in the Inquiry Brief through an expert visit (called an Audit).

Compared to other quality assurance models, TEAC's procedure is heavily grounded in explicit standards and detailed evidence that standards are met. The standards, called principles of quality, have three elements:

- Quality Principle I: Evidence of student learning, involving mastery of content knowledge and pedagogical skills;
- Quality Principle II: Valid assessment of student learning, involving evidence that the program's method(s) for assessing student learning are valid; and
- Quality Principle III: Institutional learning, involving evidence that the program undertakes continuous improvement and quality control based on its assessment of student learning.

All steps in the TEAC evaluation are based on these three principles of quality, and also on standards for demonstrating institutional "capacity," or the ability to sustain a program at acceptable levels of quality. Seven components of capacity, required by the US Department of Education for all accrediting agencies, specify requirements related to: curriculum; program faculty; facilities, equipment, and supplies; fiscal and administrative capacity; student support services; recruiting and admission practices; and student feedback. Appendix 1 details TEAC's requirements on each of these components.

### Box 1. TEAC's accreditation process at a glance

| Stages in TEAC                             | Program Faculty Actions  | TEAC Staff Actions   |
|--|--|--|
| 1. Application                             | Program faculty prepares and submits application and fee   | TEAC staff consults with the institution and program faculty; TEAC accepts or rejects application (on eligibility requirements) and accepts or returns fee accordingly.  |
| 2. Formative evaluation                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Program faculty attends TEAC workshop on writing the <i>Inquiry Brief</i> or <i>Inquiry Brief Proposal</i></li> <li>2. Program faculty submits working drafts or draft sections of <i>Brief</i> with <u>checklist</u></li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TEAC staff reviews draft Brief** or sections for coverage, clarity, and auditability and returns drafts for revisions and resubmission as needed</li> <li>2. If appropriate, TEAC solicits outside reviews on technical matters, claims, and rationale</li> </ol>  |
| 3. Inquiry Brief or Inquiry Brief Proposal | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Program faculty responds to TEAC staff and reviewers' comments</li> <li>2. Program submits final Brief with <u>checklist</u></li> </ol>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TEAC declares Brief auditable and instructs program to submit six copies of that final version of the Brief</li> <li>2. TEAC accepts <i>Brief</i> for audit and submits it to the Accreditation Panel chair for instructions to auditors</li> </ol>  |
| 4. Call for comment                        |  | TEAC places program on TEAC Web site's Call for Comment page and circulates Call for Comment page to program faculty and staff to forward to school superintendents, state board of education, teachers, principals, and employers.  |
| 5. Audit visit                             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Program faculty submits data for audit as requested</li> <li>2. Program faculty receives and hosts auditors during visit (2-3 days)</li> <li>3. Program faculty responds to Audit Report (2 weeks)</li> </ol>                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TEAC schedules audit</li> <li>2. Panel chair formulates questions and instructions for auditors; auditors verify submitted data</li> <li>3. Auditors complete visit to campus</li> <li>4. Auditors prepare Audit Report and send to program faculty, TEAC, and Accreditation Panel chair</li> <li>5. TEAC staff responds to program faculty's comments about the draft Audit Report</li> <li>6. Final Audit Report prepared and distributed</li> </ol> |
| 6. Staff analysis                          |  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TEAC completes staff analysis and sends to program and panel</li> <li>2. TEAC sends <i>Brief</i>, Audit Report, and faculty response to panel members; panel members complete worksheets</li> </ol>  |
| 7. Accreditation Panel                     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Program head attends meeting (optional)</li> <li>2. Program faculty responds (within 2 weeks)</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Panel meets and formulates Accreditation Report and sends report to program faculty</li> <li>2. Call for comment announced via e-mail and Web site</li> </ol>  |
| 8. Accreditation Committee                 |  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TEAC sends Brief, reviewers' comments, Audit Report, accreditation report, staff analysis and panel recommendation to Accreditation Committee for decision</li> <li>2. Accreditation Committee meets; TEAC sends Accreditation Committee's decision to program</li> </ol>  |
| 9. Acceptance or appeal                    | Program faculty accepts or appeals TEAC's action within 30 days.   | If the decision is to accredit and the program accepts the decision, TEAC announces the decision and schedules the annual report. If the decision is not to accredit and the program appeals, TEAC initiates its appeal process  |
| 10. Annual report                          | Program faculty submits annual report to TEAC by anniversary date of accreditation decision.   | TEAC reviews annual reports for as many years as required by program's status with   |

Preparation of an Inquiry Brief is the first step in seeking TEAC accreditation. This self-study describes the program and its results, and provides documentation on its faculty, its requirements and standards, and its quality control system. Distinctive to TEAC's review, the program also must explain the evidentiary basis for its "claims" that it provides effective student learning, has effective methods of assessing learning, and actively uses assessment to make continuous improvement. It also must address whether the evidence is dependable, persuasive and representative of the program. All claims must be supported by multiple forms of evidence that are mutually consistent.

There is flexibility in what evidence is presented. TEAC lists 18 possible forms of evidence to demonstrate Quality Principle I, on student learning. Box 2 lists the forms of evidence, including grades, evaluations of teaching skill, test scores, rates of student success, or studies of graduates or employers.

## Box 2. Types of evidence to demonstrate student learning

- **Grades**
  1. Student grades and grade point averages in each component of *Quality Principle I*: subject matter; pedagogy; and teaching skill
- **Scores on standardized tests**
  2. Student scores on standardized license or board examinations in any of the areas of *Quality Principle I*
  3. Student scores on admission tests for graduate study in the areas of *Quality Principle I*
  4. Standardized scores and gains of the program graduates' own pupils
- **Ratings**
  5. Ratings of portfolios of academic accomplishment
  6. Third-party rating of the program's students
  7. Ratings of in-service, clinical, and PDS teaching
  8. Ratings by cooperating teachers and college/university supervisors, of practice teachers' work samples
- **Rates**
  9. Rates of completion of courses and program
  10. Graduates' career retention rates
  11. Graduates' job placement rates
  12. Rates of graduates' professional advanced study
  13. Rates of graduates' leadership roles
  14. Rates of graduates' professional service activities
- **Case studies and alumni competence**
  15. Evaluations of graduates by their own pupils
  16. Alumni self-assessment of their accomplishments
  17. Third-party professional recognition of graduates (e.g., NBPTS)
  18. Employers' evaluations of the program's graduates
  19. Graduates' authoring of textbooks, curriculum materials, etc.
  20. Case studies of the graduates' learning

Similarly, for Quality Principle II, methods of assessing learning, evidence can take different forms, including interviews, surveys and classroom observations. Evaluations by employers, analyses of graduates' scores on licensure exams, or case studies of the achievements of program graduates might be offered. Programs must use multiple measures, show data by meaningful subcategories of students, and present evidence for the reliability and validity of assessment results and their interpretations of data.

Concrete evidence also must be presented with respect to Quality Principle III, active use of assessment to improve learning. A program might describe ways that past decisions to modify the program have been shaped by assessment results. Also expected are plans for further use of

assessment results to improve the program. Case studies on the use of assessment results can be offered, but they must include evidence that their methods are dependable and trustworthy.

Such in-depth attention to the evidence for student learning is distinctive to TEAC's accreditation criteria. Also exacting are its requirements with respect to program capacity, mentioned earlier. Evidence on program capacity might include data showing that the program is supported at a level that is in line with support given to other programs at the institution. Information might also be provided on what was learned through the program's internal audit of its quality control system. TEAC needs such evidence to fulfill requirements imposed by the US Department of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). In addition, TEAC considers the evidence of capacity to be important for the program's own assessment of what contributes to its success or failure with student learning, and also as evidence of good procedures for monitoring and improving programs.

TEAC has an unusual requirement that each program audit its quality control system, following TEAC guidelines. This internal audit, intended to show that systems function as intended, takes a sample of student records and follows an "audit-like" trail to ascertain whether appropriate procedures were followed as students were admitted and progressed through their studies.

Distinctive, too, is the assistance that TEAC provides to programs as they develop the Brief. TEAC offers workshops on how to develop the Brief. When a program is drafting its Brief, staff members who have been trained to examine program statements and claims will work with the Brief's authors to ensure that it is clear and complete and that evidence is in a form to be "auditable." Typical staff comments include requests for clarifications to strengthen the document's evidentiary basis, perhaps to be more specific about how program faculty are "involved" in planning, how often students meet with their advisors, or what the basis is for other general statements (Workshop..., 2005). Once the Brief is ready for audit, it is formally submitted to TEAC and an audit visit is scheduled.

Next is an external audit process, designed to provide independent verification of the evidence in the Inquiry Brief. The on-site audit visit is conducted by at least two TEAC-trained auditors. It is a rigorous and systematic review, bounded by detailed protocols and checklists developed by TEAC. The audit team's role is to determine whether the evidence in the Inquiry Brief on quality and capacity is trustworthy, and whether the evidence justifies a claim that the institution is committed to the program.

Audit team members probe whether the language of selected claims is accurate and precise. Fact checking is conducted through interviews, use of institutional data to recalculate statistics, and direct review of other primary sources that were used to support claims for each quality standard. Auditors might ask to see the actual course evaluations cited in the Brief, examine course syllabi for several different years, or ask questions about how reported problems in program management are being handled (Workshop..., 2005). Consistency among multiple sources of evidence is sought, and there is specific attention to whether contradictory or disconfirming evidence exists. Auditors are trained to avoid offering opinions or informal advice.

The audit report, completed within two weeks of the visit, describes the audit tasks that were completed and gives the team's formal opinion on the accuracy of the evidence in the Brief. The report does not offer recommendations or make judgments, as it is designed only to vouch for the *accuracy* of the evidence in the Inquiry Brief, possibly modified by information gained during the audit visit. A draft of the Audit Report is sent to the program for corrections, revised if necessary and then submitted to the TEAC Accreditation Panel.

When the audit report is complete and the auditors have attested that the evidence is accurate, TEAC procedure moves to two further, sequential steps. First, a review is conducted by a seven-member Accreditation Panel. The Panel is chosen from a pool of twelve educators appointed for three-year terms, primarily for their skills in evaluating evidence. The Panel's task is to weigh and assess the documented evidence about a program's capacity and the results it has achieved.

Using evaluation worksheets, the Panel evaluates whether each TEAC standard is met, based on the evidence found in the Inquiry Brief, the audit report, and other materials. For Quality Principle I, it reviews whether the evidence is complete, consistent, sufficient, and precise about student learning. For Quality Principle II, (valid assessment of student learning), it reviews the rationale for completeness, strength, and faculty support and whether it is grounded in scholarship. It also reviews the assessment system in terms of its design, use of multiple measures, sufficiency and precision. For Quality Principle III (use of evidence to improve programs), it reviews decision-making and the quality control system, and looks for completeness, precision, and evidence of quality improvement. Evidence on capacity is reviewed for completeness, commitment, sufficiency and precision.

The Panel makes a summative judgment, deciding whether there is *sufficient* evidence that the program is "above standard" on each quality component, considered separately. Evidence of student learning is the pivotal factor in recommending full accreditation. The Panel also assesses alternative interpretations for the evidence the program presented. If evidence is determined to be sufficient to support the program's claims, the Panel prepares a report with written justification for its recommendation on accreditation, based on a minimum of four affirmative votes.

The Panel recommends one of TEAC's categories of accreditation, shown in Appendix 2. The recommendation may identify weaknesses and may stipulate areas requiring remedy within a short period. Negative decisions include: Denial, where TEAC's standards are not met; and Adverse Action, where accreditation is revoked following a finding that a program no longer complies with TEAC standards. The Panel's report is transmitted to TEAC's president.

The Accreditation Panel meeting can be attended by a representative of the program being discussed, allowing the program to be aware of the reasoning of the Panel. There also is a point in the Panel's review when the program representative may respond briefly to questions seeking clarification on factual points. Once the Panel's report is transmitted to the TEAC president, the report is sent to the program faculty, which has two weeks to respond in writing to the arguments and findings in the report.

The Accreditation Committee of TEAC's board of directors conducts the next step in the review. The Accreditation Committee examines all documentation to determine, first, that TEAC has correctly followed its own procedures and, second, that the Panel's report and accreditation recommendation is convincing and consistent with the Committee's own readings of the materials. While the Committee's review method is closely connected to the Panel's method, it has a different, complementary task: it attempts to find evidence that would undermine a recommendation or finding. The committee then makes TEAC's final decision, with a majority vote to accept or reject the Panel's recommendation on accreditation status. If it rejects, it gives written reasons for its decision. Program faculty may appeal a decision, within 30 days, to a five-member Appeals Panel appointed by the chair of the TEAC board of directors.

In sum, TEAC has a three-step review, each focused on evidence provided by the program about its capacity and results. Each step has a different emphasis: the audit determines whether the program's claims are accurate and trustworthy; the Panel determines whether the evidence is

sufficient to warrant accreditation; and the Committee determines whether it, independently, can support or undermine the Panel's recommendation.

## **Costs**

TEAC, while still a start-up organization, has benefited from foundation support, most recently the Pew Charitable Trusts. Other funding has come from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Olin Foundation, Atlantic Philanthropies and an anonymous donor. A FIPSE grant, which supported initial design and pilot testing, ended in December 2001. Overall, TEAC has had more than \$3 million in external funding.

Following procedures of other US accrediting agencies, TEAC is primarily supported by fees (for audit visits) and by annual dues paid by members. No governmental funds, state or federal, are provided to TEAC to support its operations. TEAC's annual dues in 2005 were \$2,000, with over 100 institutional and organizational members. An audit fee of \$1,500 per auditor (for 2 to 4 auditors) is assessed for each program that begins the TEAC accrediting process. The program also pays for audit visit expenses. Auditors are paid a small honorarium and reimbursed for expenses. TEAC currently has a total staff of about seven persons.

In designing its procedures, TEAC sought to keep costs to a minimum. Data are often sent to TEAC prior to the visit to make more efficient use of the visit itself. The detailed review of an institution's Inquiry Brief before the visit also contributes to efficiency. The use of detailed protocols allows for smaller visiting teams. Programs understand, prior to the visit, what evidence to make available for the auditors. As one program reported, this significantly reduced the time and expenses of preparing for the visit, which was more intense and meaningful than other accrediting visits (Cohen, 2003).

## **Implementation and Impact**

In January 1998 the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education, a competitive-grants agency within the US Department of Education, awarded a grant to the Council of Independent Colleges to develop and test a new model for accrediting teacher education. The grant also supported a pilot test of the new accrediting process, which was carried out at three institutions: the University of Virginia, Fort Lewis College, and Texas Lutheran College.

TEAC's first four years were evaluated by Peter Ewell, a well-respected US assessment analyst, between summer 2000 and December 2001. He assessed the experiences of the three pilot accreditation reviews and compared TEAC's methods to other quality assurance approaches (Ewell, 2001). He reported several strengths:

- Clear objectives, focused on high priority issues, with an "... insistence that each program ... provide solid and direct evidence of student learning consistent with the program's goals." (p. 13)
- A structured and tightly focused approach, which makes the ground rules for the review extremely clear. (p. 15)
- Direct evaluation of the veracity of the submitted evidence on student achievement.

- Well-trained visiting teams, with extensive prior practice with audit techniques.
- Value to the programs, based on pilot-institution comments that the self-study's focus on student learning, by separating "relevant from irrelevant data," allowed them to gather data that were really useful for improvement. (p. 9)

Ewell concluded that "TEAC has ... succeeded in creating a review process that puts – and keeps – evidence of student learning at the center." (p. 14). In his view, TEAC's process matches best practice in other "leading-edge" quality assurance models. With respect to its evaluation method, he concluded that "...no other quality assurance agency in higher education ... engages in this level of detail when examining assessment-based evidence of student achievement" (p. 5).

Between 2001 and 2003, TEAC achieved two forms of recognition that are essential in establishing its legitimacy as an accrediting agency. In 2001, TEAC gained recognition from the Council on Higher Education Accreditation, signifying that it met its standards. In 2003, TEAC gained recognition from the US Department of Education's National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, which determined that TEAC met the Department's standards for accrediting agencies. TEAC's petition for federal recognition had been endorsed by the American Council on Education and by other higher education associations.

More recently, TEAC accreditation has been included in the teacher licensing requirements of at least six states, with other states likely to follow suit (Murray 2005). In 2004, TEAC held discussions with twelve other states on linking TEAC accreditation to their licensing process. To some degree, this attention to building support among individual states represents a shift in tactics for TEAC. With state endorsement, TEAC may gain greater support among teacher education programs and, thereby, offset the effects of the continued rivalry between TEAC and NCATE.

By 2005, TEAC has gained experience and has built up its membership. Ninety-five institutions of higher education (including six affiliate institutions) and 18 organizations (including 5 national organizations) are members of TEAC. Notably, TEAC has been able to broaden its base of support. Its 95 members include 30 public institutions, including 14 public doctoral universities. Of 48 institutions actively working with TEAC on documentation, 19 are public institutions and 29 are private institutions.

Nine programs have been accredited by TEAC as of July 2004, with an expectation that at least ten more will achieve accreditation status soon. Approximately 80 institutions have satisfied TEAC eligibility standards and hold "candidate" status, the first step toward accreditation. As of July 2004, 48 institutions were working with TEAC staff at some stage of developing documentation to meet the TEAC quality principles, and twenty-five Inquiry Briefs had been reviewed and critiqued by staff.

One surprise TEAC has encountered is that many programs have found it hard to use the logic of educational research for assessing their own programs. While education faculty are well trained in research inquiry – developing clear questions, designing and implementing steps to assemble evidence to answer those questions, and evaluating findings for their reliability and validity – they generally have not been systematically applying those methods to their academic courses and programs. The focus on evidence-based inquiry is a laudable part of TEAC's design, one that has been maintained, but it has taken considerable effort and re-thinking for most program faculty to start with their own questions about their mission and to gather needed evidence.

TEAC has responded by designing and holding workshops and by assigning coaches to guide and assist institutions in preparing evidence for quality. TEAC now holds at least two workshops each year to assist participants with the tasks required by the TEAC accreditation process. Workshops emphasize ways to construct clear, concise, and defensible claims about programs and

ways to select, evaluate, and use evidence to support those claims. TEAC now invests staff time in formative evaluation, assisting institutions and offering advice as they work on their Inquiry Briefs. Staff examine draft materials and provide feedback on areas in which the draft does not give sufficient detail or where descriptive language is imprecise. They point out where the evidence is inconsistent, where connections have not been demonstrated between program claims and the assessment evidence, or where no plans are shown for systematically relying on evidence for future improvement (Workshop..., 2005, p. 101).

TEAC also has found that members need greater guidance on how to meet another requirement, conducting an internal audit of their quality control system. What TEAC has learned is that most programs may have a general sense that their quality control systems work as intended, but have conducted only occasional or limited inquiries. The systematic scrutiny required by TEAC, therefore, calls for a change in program practice. As one response, TEAC has developed a separate training manual on the internal audit.

Evidence of TEAC's overall impact is found in the experience of its members, especially the institutions that have achieved accreditation or are actively preparing for TEAC review. A consistent message emerges: the TEAC process forces attention to a program's own questions about its effectiveness and yields evidence that is readily used in improving the program. In other words, the TEAC process itself adds value: program improvement is embedded in the process of developing an Inquiry Brief. Faculty members report that they have improved their program while conducting the TEAC review process – clarifying objectives or claims, identifying the extent to which evidence supports those claims, and making changes to better align their offerings with their objectives. Procedures are tightened up, better assessment tools are put to use, faculty confront weaknesses and make changes.

Under the demanding TEAC model, many programs initially make slow progress, sometimes needing to revamp program features or undertake studies as part of their preparation. Participants generally attest that the process fostered program improvement, rather than being done as an administrative task useful only to an external agency. As reported by TEAC, members have commented that "...TEAC demands honest scrutiny of programs and resources" and that "...greater opportunity for program improvement is possible than with other accreditation systems." Another comment is that "...the process is one that is relevant and is a matter of documenting and clearly articulating what we as a teacher preparation program are actually doing" Another reported a specific result: TEAC "...enabled us to get assessment front and center ... and made faculty aware of the importance of assessment" (TEAC, 2005).

Reports from institutions that have completed TEAC review support these judgments. The University of Virginia reported that the TEAC review showed that certain procedures were not functioning as intended. As a result, it strengthened the alignment between student portfolios and its learning goals, and developed more systematic ways to learn from its graduates (Cohen, 2003). Hollins University, currently in pre-accreditation status, learned during its TEAC review of inconsistencies in the way that educational and theoretical concepts were taught, and the program faculty made changes to strengthen the teaching program. Because the internal audit conducted by the Hollins faculty identified areas where their quality control system needed improvement (primarily with missing information from student files), they took steps to ensure complete files. Also, they took action to strengthen teaching components related to technology skills and classroom management, based on the TEAC review (Hollins University, 2002). At Rockhurst University, program faculty found important discrepancies between the ratings students were given by their own instructors and those given by teachers who observed student teaching. In their

Inquiry Brief, they reported several corrective steps they took, including a new departmental policy to use a new database with evidence on student progress (Workshop..., 2005). Other institutions have reported that, being dissatisfied with gaps in what they could document, they have developed novel ways of measuring learning. One institution conducted several analyses of data on their students in mathematics education, comparing their achievement to mathematics majors and also conducting correlation analyses to determine the extent to which measures of learning were coherent and consistent (F. Murray, personal communication, March 31, 2005).

During its six-year history, TEAC has weathered a certain amount of criticism (e.g., Darling-Hammond, 2000). An early concern was that TEAC does not have sufficient standards or that its standards were not performance-based. It is true that TEAC's standards were more flexible than the NCATE standards in effect throughout the 1990s, students generally seen as too prescriptive. However, an independent comparison (AACTE, 2003) has shown that TEAC standards are substantially parallel to NCATE's new standards, adopted in 2000, following its own standards revision.

While its unusual approach departs from other accreditation approaches, TEAC does have explicit and focused standards, calling for evidence of student learning, use of that evidence for program improvement, and the capacity to sustain a program of quality. These standards, and their detailed provisions, have been formally recognized by CHEA and the US government.

Some critics have said that TEAC's standards are softer than NCATE's because TEAC allows each program to decide what evidence to use to meet TEAC standards. TEAC has taken this approach for well-considered reasons, mainly to allow flexibility to programs. Thus, for example, where a program believes that its state exam is poorly designed, the program may use other evidence of student achievement, defending their choices. At present, some states have licensing exams where a "passing" score can be achieved with fewer than half of test items answered correctly. Even so, TEAC expects a persuasive rationale for the evidence that is chosen, strong evidence for each standard, and reporting of any negative evidence as well. In actual practice, most programs that have sought TEAC accreditation have used conventional evidence – grade averages and scores on state examinations – that are also used in meeting NCATE standards. To reduce the burden on programs, TEAC will accept evidence that was initially assembled for other accrediting organizations when programs are preparing their Inquiry Brief for TEAC.

Some criticism of TEAC may be related to its origins in the midst of controversy about whether teacher education programs offer good training. As one journalist characterized the conflict, "...the battle for turf involves money and politics as much as educational values" (Basinger, 1998). In this climate, some educators may be reluctant to endorse a new, unproven approach to accreditation, preferring its competitor, NCATE, which is well-known and has a long history. NCATE accreditation, held by relatively few programs, is considered prestigious. Some educators also expressed concern that, with two accreditation options, programs might "shop" for the easier process, which could cause quality to decline. For these and other reasons, TEAC has seen slow development as an alternative approach.

Both TEAC and NCATE, as voluntary accrediting bodies, face challenges from broader trends in the US that have imposed more governmental requirements, both on accreditors and on programs of teacher education. TEAC has pledged its willingness to cooperate with other accrediting organizations, and many educators look to a unified accreditation process sometime in the future. While the relationship between TEAC and NCATE remains unsettled at present, they both offer laudable and effective methods of quality assurance for programs that prepare teachers.

## Comparisons

TEAC's accreditation model combines elements from several existing forms of quality assurance. It builds on recent reforms in US accreditation and adopts some emerging ideas about effective practice from international experience with academic audit. It also borrows from widely accepted norms of scholarly inquiry.

Over the last decade, a variety of US accreditation reforms have continued to use guidelines, self-study, and site visits but have added a requirement for evidence of student learning. This "outcomes" focus is strongest among those accreditation agencies that conduct subject assessments in such fields as business, engineering, medicine, or nursing. It emphasizes the quality of delivered performance, typically documented by data on the performance of graduates on licensing exams or in initial employment. TEAC's model adopts this "outcomes" emphasis, as well as the effort by accrediting agencies to streamline their requirements on institutional capacity.

International developments with academic audit are also reflected in TEAC's approach (Dill 2000; Massy 2003). Audit models are strongly evidence-based, comparable to financial audits. Where accreditation models traditionally allow programs to prepare general reports, audits focus on institutional processes that support quality. After a decade's experience with audit in different countries, the audit approach is increasingly valued for its systematic, "evasion-resistant review methodology" that also spurs improvement. Audit processes are useful to programs because they require thoughtful and systematic attention by a program's faculty about how and why their program is meeting worthy objectives (Jennings, 2003; Massy 2003, p. 230-231).

TEAC has built on this international experience with audit. It borrowed the audit model's attention to institutional processes and its focus on evidence, and introduced an innovative requirement that each program conduct its own internal audit. It goes further than many process-oriented audit models by requiring substantial attention to evidence of student learning and program results. Thus, where most audit models look at processes that support quality, TEAC adds a critical preliminary step: programs must explain and defend their learning objectives. They also must document the processes that assure them those goals are met, and the processes that lead to quality control and improvement. This approach parallels the emphasis in Hong Kong's most recent approach, termed Quality Review, that looks to the design of curricula, methods of assessing learning outcomes, and adequate resources to offer a quality program (Dill, 2003).

Unlike other approaches to quality assurance, TEAC has grounded its model in an evaluative philosophy based on scholarly research. Thus it requires that claims be supported by evidence, expects valid assessment of student learning, and has rules for providing and evaluating evidence (consistency, reliability, validity, representativeness, etc.). Under TEAC's approach to assessing learning, for example, programs are expected to employ multiple measures to achieve a dependable finding and must provide evidence that the inferences they make conform to accepted research standards for reliability and validity.

Useful perspective on TEAC's assessment approach can be gained by comparing it to subject evaluations in Denmark, which have been conducted since 1992 by the Evaluation Institute (referred to as EVA). EVA's system for assessment, which covers a range of academic subjects, has elements that can be considered as best practice in external quality assessment.

EVA aims to have a "concrete, transparent and trustworthy process" (Stensaker, 2004, p. 8). Its approach is structured and systematic, relying on detailed protocols and specific criteria that guide the program's self-studies and site visits. Programs must provide quantitative data on their

accomplishments (including data on completion rates and drop-outs) and EVA conducts surveys among recent graduates or employers to supplement the self-study evidence (Kristoffersen, 2004, pp. 91, 95). The one- or two-day site visit is designed to validate information in the self-study through meetings with institutional representatives and students, and to examine documentation more closely. EVA staff participate in each visit, partly to ensure that evaluations follow correct procedure (Stensaker, p. 7). The evaluation report is prepared by EVA staff on the basis of input from the visiting team. After institutions have a chance to correct factual mistakes and comment on the evaluation process, the report is made public.

TEAC's approach is also highly structured and systematic. It uses detailed checklists and decision rubrics with specific criteria to guide its audits and the decisions of its Accreditation Panel and Accreditation Committee. Its entire process focuses on evidence for claims made about student achievement. Programs must give evidence about student achievement, then document the validity of that evidence and, finally, show that such evidence is used for program improvement. As Ewell commented about TEAC's model, "...the amount and quality of evidence about student learning...easily exceeded that present in virtually any other extant accreditation process" (2001, p. 14).

As with EVA's visit, the TEAC site visitors limit their role to validating the evidence in the self-study. Areas for further probes are identified in advance, based on TEAC standards, and auditors have extensive training, including practice with audit techniques.

TEAC's decision process is exacting. Its Accreditation Panel and its Accreditation Committee conduct two separate reviews of the program's evidence and make a series of decisions covering all components of the accrediting standards. Unlike EVA, TEAC separates this summative role from the site-visit auditor role, seeking to avoid the issues of "blurred boundaries" identified by some analysts (Schwarz and Westerheijden, 2004).

EVA's objectives have been described as dual, combining accountability and improvement (Kristoffersen, 2004, p. 26). Under the accountability function, programs are required to conduct self-studies and to host site visits, and they know that EVA's reports will become public. Also contributing to accountability are EVA's independent surveys among employers and graduates. The improvement function is equally important, based on EVA's responsibility under its initial legislation to "...inspire and guide..." programs (EVA 2004).

TEAC also has a dual emphasis. Accountability goals are served by its focus on student learning and its stringent reliance on evidence to support claims about learning. Improvement goals are encouraged by TEAC's self-study requirements that call for detailed probing of a program's aims, accomplishments, and evidence that it uses assessment findings to improve its program.

A core issue for all systems of external evaluation is the role of precise, defined standards versus standards that allow flexibility. EVA's view largely mirrors TEAC's stance, in that both approaches try to balance the need for defined standards with support for improvement. As EVA recently noted, there is a risk that tightly defined standards based on a conservative concept of quality could impede innovation (EVA, 2004).

EVA has followed a "fitness for purpose" model with an overall framework that allows each evaluation to be designed according to what makes sense for each specific subject being reviewed. There is active dialogue with institutions prior to the evaluation, and self-study guidelines encourage open discussion about teaching and learning issues (Stensaker, 2004, p. 12). TEAC also allows flexibility within an overall framework. It begins with standards that require a focus on student learning and its use for academic planning and improvement. However, each institution decides what evidence it will use to show that it meets TEAC's standards.

## Conclusions

The Teacher Education Accreditation Council was designed to offer an approach to accreditation that reflected some of the best contemporary thinking on external quality review. Unlike quality assurance agencies in many countries, it was not a product of a government ministry or a parliamentary decree. With this relative freedom but guided by the context in which it was developed, TEAC's founders developed an innovative approach worthy of attention by others who are interested in models for quality assurance.

Readers interested in program evaluation will find much of value in TEAC's approach. It requires that programs focus on important objectives related to student learning, but it allows them to demonstrate accomplishment of those objectives in varying ways. This approach does not stifle innovation, but it does insist on evidence that students are learning what is needed to be effective, well-qualified teachers. Elements of good research technique have been built into the evaluation design. Reviewers are taught to consider criteria of validity, reliability, and representativeness and to be alert to evidence that suggest alternative explanations.

Readers interested in uses of audit will find interesting refinements in audit technique. TEAC's audit is sharply defined and focuses heavily on evidence of student learning. Prior to the audit visit, the program's Inquiry Brief is examined closely, and clarifications are sought to strengthen the document's evidentiary basis. Site visitors are given a narrow role and are well trained, including guidance on not offering opinions. TEAC also requires programs to conduct internal audits of the administrative procedures that affect student progress; conducting this audit gives programs direct evidence of their strengths or weaknesses.

TEAC also has achieved a significant degree of transparency, attained through detailed, explicit and closely-adhered-to procedures that consistently focus on learning outcomes. Programs have detailed guidelines for preparing the self-study, and can expect site-visit auditors to maintain a disciplined focus on evidence for the program's statements. Reports from early participants indicate that TEAC's model is practical to implement and supportive of educational enhancement (Cohen 2003).

After six years, TEAC is still a "start-up" agency but it has achieved formal recognition and it has built up its membership. As a voluntary accrediting agency, it must continue to prove its worth to colleges and universities. It must also provide a voice for strengthening teacher preparation in the larger US debate over the quality of teaching in the nation's schools. Its innovative approach and focus on student learning afford it a position of strength for the years ahead.

## Links for policy-makers

### A) LIVE INTERNET LINKS

#### U.S. Department of Education:

National Advisory Committee for Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), convened by the US Department of Education. Its policies and criteria for accreditation agencies are found at: [www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/index.html)

#### Teacher Education Accreditation Council:

Information about the Teacher Education Accreditation Council, which has accredited programs since 1997, is available on its website: [www.teac.org](http://www.teac.org). The website describes TEAC's accrediting standards and procedures, with separate sections on: members and affiliate organizations; goals and principles; the inquiry brief; guidelines for producing the brief; audit; capacity standards; the accreditation panel, the accreditation decisions; accreditation judgment heuristics; links to related sites; and literature on TEAC.

#### Other nongovernmental US organizations:

#### Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA): [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org)

This website includes links to regional accrediting agencies and to professional accrediting agencies (including teacher education).

#### National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE): [www.ncate.org](http://www.ncate.org)

NCATE has accredited teacher education programs since 1954.

#### American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE): [www.aacte.org](http://www.aacte.org)

AACTE is a membership association for colleges of education.

#### Council of Independent Colleges: [www.cic.org](http://www.cic.org)

CIC is an association of private colleges, with a current membership of more than 570 members. It was an early supporter of TEAC.

#### Evaluation Institute, Denmark: [www.eva.org](http://www.eva.org)

Beginning in 1992, the Evaluation Institute has developed and applied an approach to evaluation, mainly of subject areas taught by universities in Denmark.

### B) TECHNICAL DOCUMENTS

Guidelines for Preparation of an Inquiry Brief and an Inquiry Brief Proposal. Washington, DC: Teacher Education Accreditation Council, 2003.

Prospectus for a New System of Teacher Education Accreditation. Washington, DC: Teacher Education Accreditation Council, no date.

TEAC Operation Policies Manual. Washington, DC: TEAC, no date. Available from TEAC website.

Ewell, P. (2001). Piloting a new approach to accreditation in teacher education: An evaluation of the TEAC/FIPSE project. Boulder, Colorado: National Center for Higher Education Management Services. This report can be accessed via [www.teac.org](http://www.teac.org)

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Workshop on the Inquiry Brief and Inquiry Brief Proposal. (2005). Available from TEAC on request.

## Appendix 1: TEAC requirements for evidence of institutional capacity.

### 4.1. CURRICULUM

TEAC's *Quality Principle I* sets out the required components of the curriculum. In addition, TEAC has three standards for the professional curriculum's capacity for quality:

**4.1.1** Reflects an appropriate number of credits and credit-hour requirements for the components of *Quality Principle I*. An academic major, or its equivalent, is necessary for subject matter knowledge and no less than an academic minor, or its equivalent, is necessary for pedagogical knowledge and teaching skill.

**4.1.2** Meets the state's program or curriculum course requirements for granting a professional license.

**4.1.3** Does not deviate from, and has parity with, the institution's overall standards and requirements for granting the academic degree.

### 4.2. FACULTY

TEAC requires evidence of oversight and coordination of the curriculum of the professional teacher education program. The entity responsible for the program may be an administrative department, school, program, center, institute, or faculty group. It may be as large as the entire college or university or as small as a committee of faculty and staff who have direct authority and responsibility for those aspects of the program that pertain to TEAC's quality principles. Because of the variety of structures among institutions, TEAC uses the term faculty to represent this entity.

TEAC's standard for the quality of the program faculty is the presence of the following attributes in the faculty

**4.2.1** The program faculty members must approve the *Inquiry Brief* or *Inquiry Brief Proposal* and accept the preparation of competent, caring, and qualified educators as the goal for their program.

**4.2.2** The *Inquiry Brief* or *Inquiry Brief Proposal* must demonstrate the faculty's accurate and balanced understanding of the disciplines that are connected to the program.

**4.2.3** The program faculty members must be qualified to teach the courses in the program to which they are assigned, as evidenced by advanced degrees held, scholarship, contributions to the field, and professional experience. TEAC requires that a majority of the faculty members hold a graduate or doctoral level degree in subjects appropriate to teach the education program of study and curricula. The program may, however, demonstrate that faculty not holding such degrees are qualified for their roles based on the other factors stated above.

**4.2.4** The program faculty's qualifications must be equal to or better than those of the faculty across the institution as a whole: e.g., proportion of terminal degree holders, alignment of degree specialization and program responsibilities, proportions and balance of the academic ranks, and diversity.

### 4.3. FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, and SUPPLIES

The program must demonstrate that the facilities provided by the institution for the program are sufficient and adequate to support a quality program as follows:

**4.3.1** The program must demonstrate that it has appropriate and adequate budgetary and other resource allocations for program space, equipment, and supplies to promote success in student learning as required by *Quality Principle I*.

**4.3.2** The program must have an adequate quality control system to monitor and improve the suitability and appropriateness of program facilities, supplies and equipment.

**4.3.3** The facilities, equipment, and supplies that the institution allocates to the program must, at a minimum, be proportionate to the overall institutional resources and must be sufficient to support the operations of the program. The program students, faculty, and staff must have equal and sufficient access to, and benefit from, the institution's facilities, equipment, and supplies.

#### **4.4. FISCAL and ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY**

The program must have adequate and appropriate fiscal and administrative resources that are sufficient to support the mission of the program and to achieve the goal of preparing competent, caring, and qualified educators, as indicated by the following:

**4.4.1** The financial condition of the institution that supports the program must be sound, and the institution must be financially viable.

**4.4.2** The program must demonstrate an appropriate level of institutional investment in and commitment to faculty development, research and scholarship, and national and regional service. The program faculty's workload obligations must be commensurate with those the institution as a whole expects in hiring, promotion, tenure, and other employment contracts.

**4.4.3** The program must have a sufficient quality monitoring and control system to ensure that the program has adequate financial and administrative resources.

**4.4.4** The financial and administrative resources allocated to the program must, at a minimum, be proportionate to the overall allocation of financial resources to other programs at the institution and must be sufficient to support the operations of the program and to promote success in student learning as required by *Quality Principle I*.

#### **4.5. STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

The program must make available to students regular and sufficient services such as counseling, career placement, advising, financial aid, health care, and media and technology support.

**4.5.1** Services available to students in the program must be sufficient to support their success in learning (*Quality Principle I*) and successful completion of the program.\*

**4.5.2** The program must monitor the quality of the student support services to ensure that they contribute to student success in learning (*Quality Principle I*.)

**4.5.3** Support services available to students in the program must, at a minimum, be equal to the level of student support services provided by the institution as a whole.

\* In cases where the program does not directly provide student support services, the program must show that students have equal access to, and benefit from, student support services provided by the institution.

## **4.6. RECRUITING and ADMISSIONS PRACTICES, ACADEMIC CALENDARS, CATALOGS, PUBLICATIONS, GRADING, and ADVERTISING**

The institution that offers the program must publish in its catalog, or other appropriate documents distributed to students, information that fairly and accurately describes the program, policies, and procedures directly affecting admitted students in the program; charges and refund policies; grading policies; and the academic credentials of faculty members and administrators.

As part of its audit, TEAC examines the program catalog, Web pages, or other descriptive publications (including those that contain the program's academic calendar, a list of faculty teaching in the program, and a description of the program's history and guiding philosophy) to ensure that they are both accurate and consistent with the claims made in the Brief.

**4.6.1** Admissions and mentoring policies must encourage the recruitment and retention of diverse students with demonstrated potential as professional educators, and must respond to the nation's need for qualified individuals to serve in high-demand areas and locations.

**4.6.2** The program or institution must distribute an academic calendar to students. The academic calendar must list the beginning and end dates of terms, holidays, and examination periods.

**4.6.3** Claims made by the program in its published materials must be accurate and supported with evidence. Claims made in the *Inquiry Brief* or *Inquiry Brief Proposal* regarding the program must be consistent with, and inclusive of, claims made about the program that appear in the institution's catalog, mission statements, and other promotional literature.

**4.6.4** The program must have a fair, equitable, and published grading policy. (This policy may also be the institution's grading policy.)

## **4.7. STUDENT FEEDBACK**

The quality of a program depends upon its ability to meet the needs of its students. One effective way to determine if those needs are met is to encourage students to evaluate the program and express their concerns, grievances, and ideas about the program. The faculty is asked to provide evidence that it makes a provision for the free expression of student views about the program and responds to student feedback and complaints.

**4.7.1** The institution is required to keep a file of student feedback and complaints about the program's quality, and the program's response. The program must provide TEAC with access to those records, including resolution of student grievances.

**4.7.2** Complaints from students about the program's quality must be proportionally no greater or more significant than complaints made by students in the institution's other programs.

## Appendix 2: TEAC's accreditation categories and terms

| Accreditation category  | Term*                          |
|---|--------------------------------|
| <b>Candidate**</b><br>Program is pursuing initial accreditation after having met the technical eligibility requirements   | Five years                     |
| <b>Initial accreditation</b><br>Program is awarded accreditation by TEAC for the first time   | Five years                     |
| <b>Continuing accreditation</b><br>Program is awarded reaccreditation by TEAC   | Ten years                      |
| <b>Preaccreditation</b><br>(Awarded on a one-time basis) Program's <i>Inquiry Brief Proposal</i> is approved by the Accreditation Panel and Committee; or program's <i>Inquiry Brief</i> is promising but found to be inconclusive by the Accreditation Panel and Committee | Five years                     |
| <b>New Program accreditation</b><br>(Awarded on a one-time basis) New or revised program's <i>Inquiry Brief Proposal</i> indicates initial accreditation is likely in the future  | Five years                     |
| <b>Provisional accreditation</b><br>Program's <i>Inquiry Brief</i> meets most but not all of TEAC's quality principles  | Two years                      |
| <b>Denied accreditation</b><br>Program's <i>Inquiry Brief</i> or <i>Inquiry Brief Proposal</i> does not meet TEAC standards or quality principles   | Reverts to Candidate Status*** |

\*Time before a new *Inquiry Brief* must be submitted. Term is conditional upon submission of an acceptable annual report and no adverse actions due to complaints or substantive changes.

\*\*Candidate status is renewable only if the program continues to meet eligibility requirements and has begun the process of submitting a Brief.

\*\*\*Provided eligibility requirements are met. If not, the program has no accreditation status with TEAC.