Fine Points:
Changes in the Selection Criteria Standard as applied to Undergraduate Programs – *Teacher Prep Review 2016*

In *Teacher Prep Review 2016*, NCTQ will enact several changes related to evaluating the selection criteria for admission into undergraduate teacher preparation programs:

- Move from a three-level score (meets the standard, partly meets the standard, does not meet the standard) to a five-level score (A, B, C, D, F, equivalent to: meets the standard, nearly meets the standard, partly meets the standard, meets a small part of the standard, does not meet the standard). The shift to five levels of scoring allows for more differentiation among programs.

- Increase the reliance on standardized test scores on the SAT, ACT, or a similar standardized test normed to the general college-going population. To meet the standard, a preparation program must be housed in an institution of higher education that is sufficiently selective (as indicated by a mean SAT or ACT score at or above the 70th percentile), or the program itself must be sufficiently selective (as indicated by an average program score at or above the 60th percentile, or minimum score at or above the 50th percentile).

- Reduce the weight given to minimum or average GPAs for entry into the preparation program. Although these data will still be considered for earning *partial credit* on the standard, a program can no longer *meet* the standard based on GPA data.

- Only grant "Strong Design" (represented by an A+) status to those programs that are selective *and* maintain a level of racial diversity that is the same or greater than that of the institution itself or the state's teacher population. Previously, programs could earn Strong Design for either being selective and racially diverse or for being selective based on multiple measures (GPA and standardized test scores).

Why NCTQ has changed this standard:

Keeping up with CAEP standards

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) unveiled new standards in 2013 that set a higher bar for teacher preparation admissions. As CAEP explains in the rationale for its Candidate Quality, Recruitment, and Selectivity Standard, "The quality of new teachers entering the field depends not only on the quality of the preparation they receive, but also on the capacity of preparation programs to attract and select academically able people who have the potential to be effective teachers."[1]

CAEP's original standard stated that programs can only admit candidates with at least a 3.0 grade point average (GPA) and cohorts of candidates must have increasingly high average scores on standardized tests such as the SAT, ACT, or GRE. These cohort averages must be in:

- the top 50 percent of the distribution from 2016-2017;
- the top 40 percent from 2018-2019; and
- the top 33 percent by 2020.[2]

Since that initial release, CAEP has significantly revised its standard, requiring a cohort average GPA of 3.0 at *graduation* instead of *admission* to the program, and setting a permanent cohort average standardized test score in the top 50 percent of the distribution. This revision comes without any significant change in the research basis around entry standards for teacher prep programs.
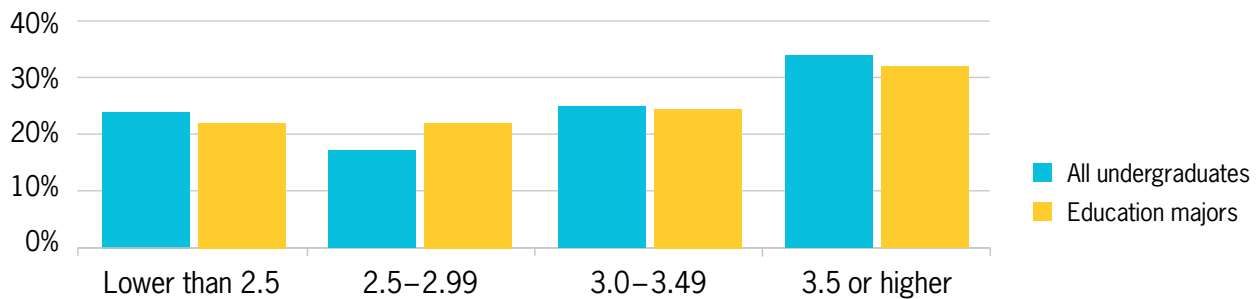
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1   Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation. (2015). *Standard 3: Candidate quality, recruitment, and selectivity.* Available at http://caepnet.org/standards/standard-3.
2   Ibid.

NCTQ's updated Selection Criteria Standard aligns closely with the initial CAEP standard. Despite CAEP's revisions, NCTQ's standard still focuses on the minimum or cohort average GPA at the point of admission, rather than at graduation, although we give admissions GPA less weight than in previous years.

The Selection Criteria Standard credits prep programs housed in institutions with a standardized test average at or above the 70th percentile, and/or teacher prep programs themselves with cohort averages at or above the 60th percentile. This is in keeping with CAEP's intended 2018-19 standard, and is set high enough so that the *majority of candidates admitted into the program would be from the top-half of the college-going population*. Moreover, the Selection Criteria Standard recognizes that programs have multiple ways to assure that candidates are in the top-half of the college-going population: the selectivity of the institution in which the program is housed, the minimum standardized test scores candidates must present, OR the average test scores of the program's candidates.

Figure 1. Average GPA, beginning college students

The majority of education majors have a 3.0 or higher GPA at the end of their first year of college, which is in line with the average GPA for all undergraduate students at the end of their first year.[3]

Evidence from licensure test scores

In addition to considering CAEP's new standard, NCTQ also considered other means to establish criteria that are both feasible for programs to implement and sufficiently rigorous to ensure that programs only admit candidates who have proven themselves to be academically successful.

One important source was information on first-time pass rates on licensure tests required by states. NCTQ used first-time pass rates to measure whether candidates' ability to pass these tests on their first attempt had any relationship with their teacher prep programs' admissions standards as measured by GPA or institutional selectivity. Only a small number of states report first-time pass rates and link these data to teacher preparation programs. Most states only report final pass rates, and some of these allow many – sometimes an unlimited number – of attempts to pass the test.

We measured the association between first-time pass rates for institutions' candidates on licensure tests and (1) teacher prep programs' minimum GPAs for admission and (2) the average SAT and ACT for the institution housing the teacher prep program. The results below show that in general institutions' pass rates had a stronger relationship with institutions' average standardized test scores than with programs' minimum GPAs.[4]

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3   National Center for Education Statistics. (2012). BPS: 2012 beginning postsecondary students. Computation by NCES QuickStats on February 2, 2016. Available at http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/quickstats/createtable.aspx. Note that these data are on education majors in their first year of college, not all of whom would ultimately pursue teacher candidacy.

4   The strength of correlations was based on Pearson's r, which measures "the strength of the linear relationship between two variables." A value of 0.00 implies that there is no linear relationship, and a value of 1.0 "indicates a perfect linear relationship." Roughly speaking, values from 0.0 to 0.30 are considered weak, values between 0.30 and 0.60 are considered moderate, and values greater than 0.60 are considered strong. However, even a strong correlation does not prove that one variable causes the other. Healey, J. F. (2009). *Statistics: A tool for social research, eighth edition.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Table 1.   Relationship between first-time pass rates on licensure tests, programs' minimum GPA requirements, and institutions' average SAT and ACT scores

	Minimum program GPA & Pass rate	Average IHE SAT & Pass rate	Average IHE ACT & Pass rate
Michigan[6]	Very weak positive	Moderate positive	Strong positive
Pennsylvania[7]	Moderate positive	Moderate positive	Weak positive
New York[8]	Weak positive	Strong positive	Strong positive
Kentucky[9]	Moderate negative	Strong positive	Weak positive

The weak relationship between minimum GPAs and first-time pass rates suggests that grades, or at least the programs' minimum bars for grades, are not an effective tool to ensure that entering teacher candidates are academically accomplished. However, the relationship between institutional selectivity and first-time pass rates is generally stronger, suggesting that standardized test scores may be a better measure of academic proficiency than the floor that programs currently set for candidates' grades.[9]

Why do selection criteria matter?

Compelling evidence suggests that selecting teacher candidates with greater academic ability will pay off. For more research on this topic, please see the Rationale in the Selection Criteria Standard Book.

However, NCTQ also places great value on well-designed training. Any program that earns high ratings on other key standards can earn a program score that places it in the top of the rankings distribution, even if the program does not meet the Selection Criteria Standard.

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5   Using three years of score data, August 2010 to July 2013, from the Michigan Test for Teacher Certification (MTTC).

6   Based on Pennsylvania's Teacher Preparation Program pass rates using three years of data from 2010-2013. Note that the licensure test data includes both undergraduate and graduate programs, while the GPA, SAT, and ACT data apply only to undergraduate programs.

7   Using ALST data for New York, which applies to all programs at an institution, and undergraduate secondary program selection data.

8   Based on first time pass rates for ETS tests on English, Social Studies, Mathematics, Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Earth Science, and Selection Criteria data for undergraduate secondary programs in Kentucky.

9   These data come with some caveats. The tests' contents vary across many subjects, and content preparation may vary by program in a way that confounds associations. Furthermore, in some cases licensure test data were reported for both undergraduate and graduate programs, while standardized test score data applied only to undergraduate programs.