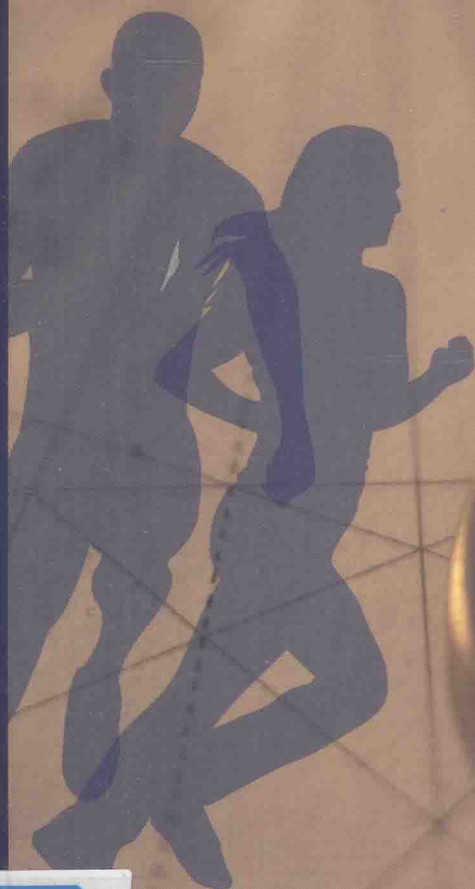


Navigating the Program Evaluation Process for PETE & Kinesiology

A Roadmap for Success



National Association for
Sport and Physical Education

Terry A. Senne • Jacalyn L. Lund

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National Association for
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*an association of the American Alliance for Health,
Physical Education, Recreation and Dance*

NASPE Sets the Standard

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to our friend and mentor, De Raynes.

Preface

When most people think about program evaluation, they think about Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP) accreditation or the stressful on-site visit by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). In fact, many physical education teacher education (PETE) faculty members measure time until retirement by the number of National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE)/NCATE program reports they will need to write before they enter their golden years.

There are, however, other reasons for undergoing program evaluation. University climates are changing, and budgets are decreasing. Instead of being almost fully funded, institutions increasingly must rely on grants and other sources of revenue. Also, the funds allocated by state legislatures are coming with more and more strings attached. Much like public schools, universities are being held accountable for student learning. As such, they are starting to add requirements for program evaluation and documentation of candidate performance. Deans are using program evaluation and documentation of candidate performance to justify additional faculty positions. Consider this scenario: A department chair is trying to convince the dean that a program in the department needs a new faculty position. Program enrollment has increased by 225 percent over the past four years, with no increase in the number of faculty members. Classes have doubled in size, to accommodate enrollment increases, and most classes — including advanced classes taken just prior to the internship semester — have at least 70 students in them. The increased class size has affected faculty member time and has resulted in decreased grant writing, decreased research productivity and less publication. The dean promises to increase the number of faculty positions if the chair provides evidence of program quality. In this case, providing program evaluation data to demonstrate excellence is the key to resolving issues created by an inadequate number of faculty positions. What data will make the most compelling case for program excellence?

Conducting a program evaluation and writing an accreditation report (or a program report for national recognition) are similar in many ways, yet they also differ somewhat. Writing an accreditation report involves conducting a program evaluation while adhering to specific guidelines outlined by the accrediting agency. Some program faculty members consider the accreditation process to be a rigorous challenge and a tedious and demanding exercise that is required to attain or retain national recognition or accreditation. It's often high-stakes in nature, and is conducted under extreme pressure and within limited time constraints. Thus, one difference between program evaluation and writing an accreditation report is the voluntary nature of the former.

The second difference resides in the fact that programs seek accreditation only periodically. For instance, some accredited programs are reviewed only once every seven years. Subsequently, program faculty members can choose not to evaluate their program on a continuous basis. Doing so, however, puts programs at risk of becoming outdated and/or losing their accreditation status. If program faculty members choose this option, they could miss opportunities to improve program and candidate quality. They also run the risk of not having enough data when it's time to begin another cycle of writing the accreditation report.

Conversely, if program evaluation is ongoing, regardless of whether an accreditation report is due, program faculty members can monitor results carefully while making timely programmatic modifications or changes. Ongoing program evaluation allows faculty members to monitor the program's pulse continuously to improve program quality while remaining relevant and current.

One final important point: Continuous improvement, as a practice, must begin at the faculty level, where primary responsibility for coursework resides. Program faculty members must examine, analyze and interpret the quality of course delivery and candidate performance. Reflective examination, analysis and interpretation must occur at the conclusion of every semester for all program courses taught. In-depth course evaluation, in addition to overall program assessment and evaluation, ensures a two-pronged approach (top-down and bottom-up) to continuous program improvement and development.

Chapter 1 of this book provides an overview of the program evaluation process. The next three chapters contain suggestions about developing assessments (Chapter 2), establishing rubrics and developing criteria for assessments (Chapter 3) and using assessment data for program improvement (Chapter 4). Chapter 5 provides a description of how to "unpack" NASPE's National Standards for Initial PETE (NASPE, 2009), while Chapter 6 outlines the requirements specific to writing a program report for NASPE national recognition. Finally, in Chapter 7, we share our best suggestions about putting the final report together, whether for internal or external program evaluation. The book concludes with a section that describes the development of an internal curriculum review (redesign) report using the process described in this book, along with the decisions and the rationale for each step.

We would like to thank those professionals who reviewed the initial draft of this book and offered many helpful suggestions to improve its quality. We appreciate their insight and feel that their ideas strengthened our original thoughts.

Now, in the spirit of continuous program development, we offer this book to assist program faculty members in the process. We have implemented all of the steps successfully at our own institutions and wish to share our ideas and suggestions to help you begin your journey of continuous program evaluation.

Let the journey begin!

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Chapter 1

Orientation to Program Evaluation

Education at the university level is changing. Many of the changes result from increased emphasis on outcomes-based learning, in which real learning is measured instead of “seat time,” or how many hours candidates attend any particular course. The journey begins here, with an overview of program evaluation.

Why program evaluation? Oden (2009) provides in eloquent Socratic fashion the rationale for why program faculty members should choose to go through the program evaluation or accreditation process:

We are a collection of teachers and scholars seeking always to expand the boundaries of what counts as knowledge, promoting our students’ learning and learning from them. So, why would we not wish to learn all we can about ourselves? What possible objection might we formulate to a process that allows us to discover our strengths and weaknesses, our successes and challenges, our wont constantly to change to meet a changing world? About the only thing we can predict about the future is that the future is unpredictable, so why not work together to shape an education that will prepare our students for such a future? (p. 38)

In this chapter, we provide an orientation to program evaluation and an overview of the process. The concept of program evaluation as a continuous cycle serves as the underlying theme. Specifically, we:

- Define program evaluation and its purposes.
- Clarify terms and definitions that we use throughout the book.
- Outline an eight-step program evaluation process.
- Provide a strong rationale for implementing program evaluation as a continuous cycle.

Terms & Definitions

Throughout this book, we use a couple of sets of terms on a consistent basis. It makes sense to clarify and define them here. The first term that we use is “candidate.”

Defined, this refers to any college/university student enrolled in a degree program, whether it’s teacher education, exercise science or any other degree program at the college/university level. We choose to use the term “candidate” instead of “student” to avoid confusion with a child or adolescent in the K-12 environment. We use the term “student” only in reference to K-12.

Likewise, we need to clarify the terms “accreditation” and “national recognition.” We use the term “accreditation” when referring to an entity or agency that has the authority to determine which college/university programs qualify for accreditation, such as the Commission on Sport Management Accreditation (COSMA), or when referring to a teacher education unit that receives accreditation through NCATE. We use the term “national recognition” only in the context of addressing Specialized Professional Association (SPA) programs, such as NASPE’s. SPAs may grant *national recognition* to college/university professional education programs that meet their standards.

Program Evaluation as a Continuous Cycle

In this book, we look broadly at program evaluation, viewing it as a process by which program faculty members can attain and maintain program improvement and quality. One can view program evaluation as a continuous process that does not end. It:

- Poses critical questions about academic program and candidate quality.
- Assesses specific program traits or characteristics (typically, based on standards).
- Gathers assessment data over time.
- Analyzes and interprets data.
- Helps program faculty render judgments about program quality.
- Helps program faculty make judgments regarding program and curricular changes that will improve the quality of the program and its candidates.
- Generates a cycle of continuous improvement.

What Is Program Evaluation?

Mizikaci (2006) defines program evaluation as:

... a systematic operation of varying complexity involving data collection, observations and analyses, and culminating in a value judgment with regard to the quality of the program being evaluated, considered in its entirety, or through one or more of its components.
(p. 41)

Program evaluation provides the means by which faculty members can render a judgment about the *quality* of their program and candidates. Initially, conducting a program evaluation provides academic programs with objective baseline data about program and candidate performance. Subsequently, based on identified strengths and weaknesses specific to national standards, state standards or programmatic goals, faculty members can make necessary modifications and changes.

Purposes of Program Evaluation

Program evaluation can serve a variety of functions. It can:

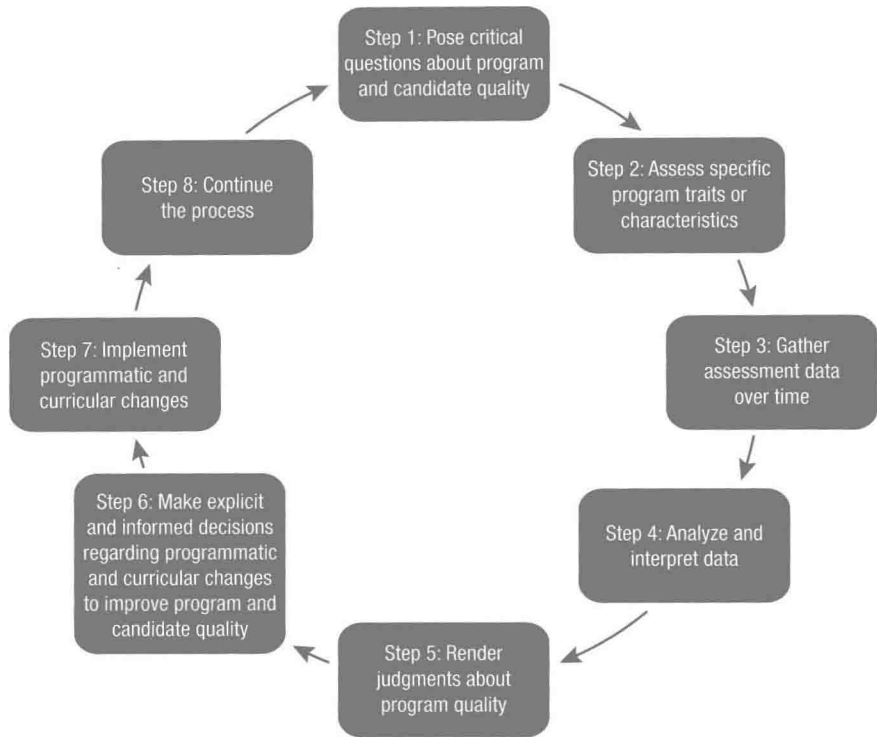
- Examine a single programmatic aspect and, subsequently, use that information to make curricular decisions specific to the targeted aspect.
- Document evidence of institutional effectiveness (IE) for the department as part of the university's IE plan.
- Provide data beneficial to the departmental/unit yearly review.
- Produce data beneficial to the program itself, including data that:
 - Make a case for the program's viability by supplying substantive, objective data that offer support for maintaining it.
 - Justify the need for additional program support and/or resources.
- Provide data as part of program report documentation for national recognition through the SPA.
- Provide data and substantive program information for program, unit and/or institutional accreditation purposes, including that from NCATE, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) and COSMA.
- Serve as a mechanism for prompting policy change.

The Program Evaluation Process

We offer the following eight-step process as a guide to program evaluation. These steps are generic in nature and apply across disciplines and academic programs. They are illustrated in Figure 1.1.

Step 1: Pose critical questions about program and candidate quality. Faculty members must determine thoughtfully what they want to know about the program and its candidates. What questions do they want addressed through this process? If faculty members define their purpose(s) clearly by asking explicit and accurate questions, the data are more likely to reveal accurate answers to the questions posed.

Figure 1.1. The Program Evaluation Process



Step 2: Assess specific program traits or characteristics. As part of the program evaluation process, faculty members select traits or characteristics that align with the questions generated during Step 1. If seeking to improve program and candidate quality, faculty members should determine traits or characteristics of what the “end products” (graduates) should look like as candidates complete the degree program. They then use these traits or characteristics, in part, to select or develop program assessments that provide evidence specific to the selected traits/characteristics.

Often, for accreditation purposes, the questions are predetermined, and program faculty members are expected to show how well their candidates perform against a specific set of standards. Consequently, in this case, the question is “Do program candidates demonstrate an appropriate level of competency specific to the designated standards?”

This is a critical step in the program evaluation process. Selecting program traits or characteristics that don’t align clearly with the intent of the program evaluation can produce evidence (data) that fails to provide an accurate picture of the program based

on the questions posed. Regardless of the reason for conducting the program evaluation, it's essential that the program assessments used align directly with the standards, characteristics or traits guiding the program evaluation process, providing accurate data-driven information.

Step 3: Gather assessment data over time. Based on the program traits/characteristics identified and program assessments selected during Step 2, program faculty members collect data on the selected assessments over time. Looking at the data over time allows faculty members to determine whether any trends are occurring. Gathering data for only a single semester on a particular assessment, trait or characteristic doesn't provide faculty members with a clear sense of how the program is performing. In contrast, analyzing data from specific program assessments over several semesters helps to identify program and candidate strengths, as well as deficiencies. Only by providing a series of "snapshots" of selected program assessments over time does the big picture of program effectiveness become focused.

Step 4: Analyze and interpret data. What do the data reveal about the program and the quality of its candidates? Where are the program's strengths? What are its deficiencies or challenges? Are some curricular areas not being addressed?

Those are but a few of the questions that program faculty members must consider during Step 4 of the program evaluation process. They must conduct the analysis and interpretation component with great care, focusing on what fixes are necessary to make the program better, while also maintaining program strengths. Step 4 is crucial in the program evaluation process, because it's within this step that program faculty respond (based on data) to the questions posed in Step 1.

Step 5: Render judgments about program quality. This step is tied closely to Steps 4 and 6. Once data are analyzed and interpreted, program faculty members make a judgment about the program's quality. Valid and reliable data are essential to determining program quality. Step 5 requires faculty members to interpret the data correctly. Looking at data objectively is difficult, especially for those who are integral to the program's delivery, but if program faculty members allow biases to influence their judgments about program quality, the entire program evaluation process is for naught. Step 5, then, becomes the catalyst for Step 6.

Step 6: Make explicit and informed decisions regarding program and curricular changes to improve program and candidate quality. These decisions will vary by program and context. Deliberate initiatives taken in Step 6 will remediate any real or potential deficiencies and improve the program's quality. Sometimes, the decisions are curricular in nature; at other times, a decision might call for additional resources or an additional faculty member. In some cases, decisions can initiate changes in course sequencing. Typically, these decisions are program-specific. Making informed program and

curricular decisions based on data instead of on fragmented anecdotal observations provides a strong objective platform for the resulting initiatives.

Step 7: Implement program and curricular changes. Once program faculty members have made the program and curricular decisions in Step 6, they implement the changes. Developing a timeline for implementation will help facilitate the process. Some changes are relatively easy and don't require action from the unit or university. Changes that necessitate catalog revisions and those that affect other content areas will take more time and effort to implement.

Step 8: Continue the process. Step 8 is the most important aspect of continuous program evaluation. Data collection and program improvement don't end once program and curricular changes are made to an academic program. Rather, program faculty members begin, once again, to pose questions about the changes made or to pose questions of a different nature, gather assessment data to respond to the questions, analyze and interpret data, render judgments, make additional decisions and implement changes. Thereby, they continue the evaluation process for continuous improvement.

Rationale for Continuous Program Development and Evaluation

Assessing the effectiveness and quality of an academic program through a systematic, data-driven approach of continuous program evaluation allows academic programs to stay current in discipline-specific content knowledge and its application, based on research and education-reform initiatives or state/federal mandates. Today's education climate demands that schools and institutions of higher education work diligently to address the needs of a changing society. Jewett, Bain and Ennis (1995) state that curricula should not be static; rather, they ought to be under revision constantly.

Continuous program evaluation, in addition to participation in the accreditation process, conveys the notion of a program changing when necessary to reflect the needs of society and the discipline. If, for example, program candidate performance starts to diminish relative to a specific standard or program goal, faculty members can see the trend immediately and respond by making timely curricular changes, instead of revisiting data only once every several years during the accreditation process.

Further, conducting program evaluation on a continuous basis allows program faculty members to take a systematic and holistic view of the total program. Most institutions have multiple faculty members teaching the various courses required for a program of study. Although individual faculty members have a good sense of what is happening in their own courses, they really don't have much of a sense of how candidates are performing in other degree-program courses. That can be particularly problematic for academic programs in which students must take some courses outside the department or school/college. Likewise, when a new faculty member joins a program, the content