



Formative evaluation

From “Practical Matters,” pages 17-19, in *Guide to Accreditation* (2010)

Will TEAC give us any guidance as we prepare our Brief?

The TEAC staff’s decision that a *Brief* is auditable is based on the accuracy of the checklist submitted with the *Brief*, which attests that all the required parts are in fact in the *Brief*. The authors are free to make their case in any way they find persuasive, while at the same time conforming to format requirements such as page limitations, required sections, and accuracy.

TEAC offers guidance and feedback in a variety of ways. The comprehensive *Guide to Accreditation* gives detailed instructions on writing the *Brief*, and two copies are provided as part of membership in TEAC (extra copies may be purchased). The *Guide* also appears on the TEAC website in PDF format.

In addition, TEAC provides a staff liaison to assist the program over a period of weeks and months in the writing and editing of the *Brief*, methodological design, statistical analysis, interpretations of evidence. TEAC funds this service from the audit fees all programs pay in the year of their audits.

To further guide members in their process, TEAC offers a variety of additional formative evaluation services. Each of these services has a fee (for workshop dates and ordering information, see www.teac.org):

1. Each October and March, TEAC conducts workshops for those who would like more assistance. (Workshop fees run between \$450 and \$500 excluding travel costs.) The workbook given to participants is designed to help program faculty get started on a *Brief*, extra copies for campus colleagues are also available for purchase.
2. On request, TEAC can provide tailored workshops on-site for a program or group of programs (such as a sector- or state-based consortium) for \$2,000 plus the cost of materials.
3. TEAC can provide individual consultation for a program, in TEAC’s offices for a fee of \$1,000.
4. In rare cases where a program requires or desires more help than the staff liaison can provide, TEAC can provide consultants on an individually negotiated cost basis.

Are the TEAC staff providing formative evaluation for the Inquiry Brief involved in the accreditation decision?

There is a “firewall” between TEAC’s formative evaluation of the *Inquiry Brief* and its summative evaluation: the staff who conduct one do not conduct the other. In the case of the *Inquiry Brief Proposal*, however, the auditors may provide formative evaluation and guidance in the formulation of a successful plan for writing a subsequent *Inquiry Brief*.

When will TEAC conduct the audit?

During the formative evaluation, TEAC staff review drafts of the *Brief*. When TEAC finds the *Brief* complete, it is then ready for audit, or *auditable*, and the program submits a final version of the *Brief*. Only after an *Inquiry Brief* or *Inquiry Brief Proposal* is declared auditable will TEAC schedule an audit of the program or, if the program has a target audit date because of state requirements, confirm a scheduled audit.

TEAC audits programs only while courses are in full session, when most students and faculty on campus. Thus, TEAC has two audit periods during each academic year: from September 15 to December 15; and from January 15 to April 15. The current TEAC audit schedule, below, includes a period for formative evaluation and the timing of accreditation decision.

To allow sufficient time for both TEAC’s review and any revisions the program may make in the *Brief*, TEAC asks each candidate for accreditation to develop and commit to an accreditation plan, which you can download from the TEAC Web site and submit to TEAC. Start by using the schedule below to identify the target audit period and accreditation date. To take advantage of any of the optional formative evaluation services TEAC

offers, the program must submit an initial full draft for review at least six months before the audit date to allow sufficient time both for the TEAC staff to study the draft and for the program faculty to meet and address TEAC feedback and make any revisions that may be required or advisable. Whether a program engages the optional formative evaluation services or not, the program should plan to submit its last revised, or final, draft of the *Brief* at least two months before the target audit date for an auditability decision. If TEAC finds the *Brief* auditable, the audit date will be confirmed. If, however, the *Brief* needs more than very minor revisions, the review process will have to continue into the next audit period and the program will need to schedule a new audit date.

From "TEAC's evaluation of the Brief," pages 39-40, *Guide to Accreditation* (2010)

Formative evaluation based on the questions:

Is the program making a persuasive case for itself? Does the Brief include all the required elements? Is the language clear and precise?

The process of developing the *Inquiry Brief* or *Inquiry Brief Proposal* embodies the idea of continuous improvement. TEAC sees the *Brief* as a living document, so to speak, and consequently welcomes frequent consultation between the program faculty and TEAC about the *Brief*, particularly about effective approaches to substantiating the claims the program faculty makes. The TEAC staff sees its role as assisting the program faculty in making the best case possible that is consistent with the evidence the faculty has about its students' accomplishments and related claims. For this reason, and at the program's request, TEAC reviews draft *Briefs* and provides feedback and guidance and a range of services to those seeking accreditation. A key task of the TEAC staff's formative evaluation of the *Inquiry Brief* is checking the precision of the language and evidence.