

# TEAC's evaluation of the *Brief*

TEAC evaluates the *Brief* in five steps: formative evaluation, auditability decision, audit, summative evaluation, and accreditation decision. Each step is based on a set of questions.

## 1. Formative evaluation

*Is the program making a clear case for itself? Does the Brief include all the required elements? Is the language clear and precise?* TEAC believes that evidence of ongoing program improvement is an essential element of quality assurance. For example, TEAC requires all programs with accreditation status to submit annual reports that include the results of an internal audit and discussion of plans to improve or make necessary changes.

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 expects 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, TEAC reviews draft *Briefs* and provides feedback and guidance (see steps 2 and 3 of the TEAC accreditation process, inside front cover).

A key task of the TEAC staff's formative evaluation of the *Inquiry Brief* is checking the precision of the language and evidence. It is important that the language in the *Brief*, particularly the language of the rationale and the quality control system, means exactly what it seems to.

*See Appendix 1 for a sample of the checklist the formative evaluators use in reviewing drafts.*

## 2. Auditability decision

*Is the Brief complete and ready to be audited?* When both the program faculty and TEAC staff are satisfied that the program has made the best case possible, the program faculty submits a final draft of the *Brief*, complete with a covering checklist (Appendix 1). TEAC staff completes a similar checklist that certifies that the *Brief* contains all the features required for an audit. This certification is a simple precaution and raises the probability that the audit will have a satisfactory outcome for the program and TEAC. Only then is the audit scheduled.

*See audit schedule, Part One and Appendix 1.*

## 3. Audit

*Is the evidence in the Brief trustworthy?* Through the audit, TEAC verifies the data behind the claims the faculty makes in the *Inquiry Brief* or *Inquiry Brief Proposal*.

The auditors determine whether or not the evidence in the *Brief* is trustworthy. To do so, the auditors need access to the raw data of the *Brief*. The faculty should be prepared to show the TEAC auditors the data that are portrayed in the *Brief*. Because the TEAC auditors will try to verify as much of the *Brief* as can be practically managed from the TEAC's offices, the faculty may be asked to send the supporting source data to TEAC before the audit. By its very nature, a substantial portion of the audit, however, must be conducted on site.

### **Audit of the *Inquiry Brief***

The main purpose of the audit of an *Inquiry Brief* is to verify the evidence the program faculty has cited in support of its claims that the program meets TEAC's three quality principles and seven capacity standards. The auditors select samples of evidence that they predict will reveal and represent the totality

of the evidence the program faculty has presented in the *Inquiry Brief*. The auditors are free to search for additional evidence in the process of the audit and these discoveries may support, strengthen, or weaken the verification of the evidence behind the program faculty's claims with regard to the quality principles and the capacity standards.

### **Audit of the *Inquiry Brief Proposal***

The main purpose of the audit of an *Inquiry Brief Proposal* is to verify the text and evidence the program faculty members have cited with respect to the rationale, *Quality Principle III*, and the evidence of institutional commitment to the program and the other requirements of 4.1–4.7. As with the audit of the *Inquiry Brief*, the auditors select samples of evidence that they predict will reveal and represent the totality of the evidence the program faculty have presented in the *Inquiry Brief Proposal*. In the process of the audit, the auditors are free to search for additional evidence; these discoveries may support, strengthen, or weaken the verification of the evidence, or proposed evidence, for the program faculty's claims that the program meets TEAC's quality principles and the capacity standards.

*See a full account of the TEAC audit in Part Six.*

## **4. Summative evaluation**

*Are the evidence and the arguments in the Brief sufficient to support the program's claims that it meets TEAC's quality principles and standards? Are the program's graduates competent, caring, and qualified? Is the evidence reliable, valid, and sufficient?*

TEAC's Accreditation Panel then determines if the evidence, as verified by the audit, is of sufficient magnitude to support the claims in the *Brief*, and if it is valid and reliable. On the basis of its examination, the panel recommends an accreditation decision to the Accreditation Committee.

*See Part Seven for a complete description of the Accreditation Panel's process.*

## **5. Accreditation decision**

*Should the Accreditation Panel's recommendation be accepted? Was the TEAC process that ended in the panel's recommendation followed properly?*

TEAC's Accreditation Committee makes the TEAC accreditation determination after a systematic evaluation of the panel's recommendations and the process that led up to it.

*See chart in Part One or Appendix 1, describing the categories and terms of TEAC accreditation. See Part Seven for a full description of the panel and committee's processes.*

In their deliberations, the panel and committee are guided by a set of heuristics for the accreditation decision. These heuristics, described in detail in Part Seven of this guide, are the same for both the *Inquiry Brief Proposal* and the *Inquiry Brief* with regard to the rationale (2.1), *Quality Principle III* (3.1 and 3.2), and the evidence of commitment and capacity (4.1–4.7).