

Summary of the Case¹ (from the Inquiry Brief)
Rochester Institute of Technology
Teacher Education Program-Master of Science in Secondary Education
of Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
Audit Dates: March 30-31

Introduction and program demographics

The Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) is a privately endowed, coeducational university located in Rochester, New York. Founded in 1829, RIT has a current enrollment of 15,200 students who are served by 907 full-time and 406 part-time faculty members.

The National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) is one of eight colleges of RIT. It was established in 1965 through an act of Congress for the purpose of providing technical and professional education programs for deaf students. NTID established the degree program for the Master of Science in Secondary Education of Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (MSSE) in 1995 to address the national need for teachers at the secondary level capable of effectively teaching deaf and hard-of-hearing students in secondary academic subjects. The MSSE program emphasizes the preparation of content-certified secondary teachers for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, and is the first dual-certification program of this kind in the United States at the secondary level. The program is registered by the New York State Education Department to endorse graduates for initial certification to teach deaf and hard-of-hearing students in grades K-12, and one of the following academic subject areas: English, mathematics, social studies, American Sign Language, biology, chemistry, earth science and physics. At present, 60 students are enrolled in the program, which is staffed by 3 full-time and 20 part-time faculty members. The program was approved by the Council on the Education of the Deaf (CED) in 1997 and again in 2004.

Program Claims

The MSSE faculty claim that the program prepares teachers who are qualified in educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing in their subject areas in the following ten ways:

1. The program students have sufficient knowledge in the content area in which they plan to teach.

¹ The Summary of the Case is written by the auditors and approved by program faculty. The Summary reflects the auditors' understanding of the case the faculty are making for accreditation.

- Faculty provide as evidence the pass rate on the Content Specialty Test (CST) in the specific content areas.
2. The students acquire pedagogical knowledge and skills in the program to become effective teachers.
- Faculty provide as evidence the relevant course grades, student teaching grades, student teaching evaluations, and the pass rate on the Assessment of Teaching Skills- Written (ATS-W).
3. The program prepares the students to interact with a diverse group of learners.
- Faculty provide as evidence relevant course grades.
4. The program prepares the students to think critically about what they are doing and how they are doing it.
- Faculty provide as evidence relevant course grades.
5. The MSSE students become lifelong learners after completing the program.
- Faculty provide as evidence results from the alumni survey.
6. The program prepares the students to be effective teachers.
- Faculty provide as evidence grades in the pedagogical courses, student teaching grades, and the pass rate on ATS-W.
7. The program students are competent in the use of American Sign Language.
- Faculty provide as evidence the results of the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI), results from the student teaching evaluations, and results from the alumni survey.
8. The MSSE program students are competent in the use of technology.
- Faculty provide as evidence relevant course grades and results from student teaching evaluations.
9. The program prepares caring professionals.
- Faculty provide as evidence results from student teaching evaluations.

10. The program graduates are competent and fully qualified to teach their respective academic subject areas to students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Faculty provide as evidence the pass rate on the LAST, the ATS-W, the CST in Deaf Education and the CSTs in the specific content areas, as well as grades in pedagogy courses and student teaching grades.

Evidence supporting the claims

The measures fall into five categories listed below along with associated reliability and validity information provided in the Inquiry Brief:

1. New York State Teacher Certification Examinations, including the LAST, the ATS-W, the CST in Deaf Education, and the CSTs in the specific content areas (Claims 1, 2, 6, 10).

The New York State Teacher Certification Exams are professionally-designed standardized tests designed to assess knowledge and skills important for educators. Validity of these tests is based on alignment with their designed purposes with the associated Claims.

2. Course grades (Claims 1, 2, 6, 8, 10)

By RIT Graduate Student Policy, the MSSE students must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA to remain in good academic standing. Validity of the grades in specific areas is based on faculty review of the relevant courses and alignment of these courses with the associated Claims.

3. Student teaching evaluations (Claims 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)

Student teaching evaluations are completed by the cooperating teachers and shared with their student teachers. Validity of the evaluations is based on alignment of evaluation items with the associated Claims.

4. Alumni Survey (Claims 5, 7)

The MSSE alumni survey was conducted during the 2002-2003 academic year. Graduates from 1997-2002 were asked to participate in the study. Forty-three out of 60 graduates responded. The faculty felt, based on the results from a

prior survey, they needed to revise the survey to better reflect the program Claims.

5. SCPI (Claim 7)

The SCPI assesses American Sign Language as it is used among skilled sign language communicators in the United States. It yields ratings from Novice through Superior Plus. The SCPI is an interview-based assessment developed by a group of deaf educators in the early 1980s, and so validity is based on authenticity, expert opinion, and refinement over time. Specifically, see below:

Caccamise, F., & Samar, V. (2006, May). Reliability and Validity of the Sign Communication Proficiency Interview (SCPI) at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. Working Paper, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester Institute of Technology.

This paper reports on a reliability and validity study for 159 SCPIs conducted at NTID from 2003 through-2006. The SCPI evaluation protocol is designed to converge toward increasingly reliable and valid final and official ratings through the use of multiple stages of independent ratings and negotiated discussion and review of candidates' interviews in relation to a standardized scaled linguistic performance profile. The results of this study support that the SCPI evaluation protocol successfully accomplishes this goal. Monitoring of NTID SCPI Team members' ratings within SCPI Ratings Teams of three will continue in order to help ensure the continued reliability and validity of the SCPI process as conducted at NTID.

The program faculty list additional measures in support of the Claims whose results are not reported in the Inquiry Brief, including an administrator survey, which is still under analysis; and qualitative measures used primarily for formative assessment, such as non-graded portfolios and videotaped reviews.

Results

Overall, the faculty found that the results supported their claims. Specifically, over 90% of the students maintain a 3.0 GPA in the relevant courses throughout their graduate career; over 80% of the graduates pass the New York State Teacher Certification Exams; over half of the students receive overall ratings of 4 or 5 out of 5 on the student teaching evaluations; almost half of the program's graduates obtain an Advanced or Superior rating and over 85% of the students obtain an Intermediate or higher rating on the SCPI; over 95% of the students in the technology course received an A or B; and over 85% of the students received a rating of 4 or 5 out of 5 in the items aligned with the caring attitude claim on the Student Teaching Evaluation form.

Plan for program improvement

Through the alumni survey, student panel discussion, and informal interactions between the program faculty and the students, faculty concluded that they need to focus on providing more instruction on classroom management and Individual Education Plan (IEP) writing, as well as support of teacher candidates who will teach deaf students with secondary disabilities. The faculty identified the need for increased attention to sign language skills among some of the faculty and students, and to English skills among some of the students.

Quality Control

The MSSE program faculty conducted the internal audit by considering how each of the seven capacity components related to four hypothetical students. Each of four groups considered one of these hypothetical students, whose profiles were as follows: (1) meets all admission requirements, (2) meets all admission requirements except the completion of 30 credits in the content area, (3) meets all admission requirements except the ASL proficiency requirement, and (4) meets all admission requirements except minimum GPA of 3.0.

Through this process, the faculty identified issues that need to be addressed, including identifying appropriate rooms for teaching, responding to administrative pressure for higher enrollment resulting in larger class-sizes than desired, aligning the budget allocation with the surging enrollment numbers, and establishing recognition of the teaching load of the part-time faculty in the MSSE program.

Evidence of commitment and capacity

The faculty reported that the program conforms to the institutional norms with regard to the length of the curriculum, qualifications of the faculty, class sizes, office space, computers and professional development opportunities. They concluded that Rochester Institute of Technology and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf are committed to the MSSE program and provide suitable capacity for a quality program.

Audit visit logistics

The auditors conducted the majority of the audit in a conference room, Room 3256, in Lyndon Baines Johnson Building.

Overview of the audit opinion and commitment finding

Overall the *Brief* earned a clean audit opinion, and each component of the TEAC system received a clean or qualified opinion. The auditors also concluded that the evidence supports the view that Rochester Institute of Technology/National Technical Institute for the Deaf is committed to the MSSE Program.

Authorship and Approval of the Inquiry Brief

The Inquiry Brief was written by Gerald Bateman and Nora Shannon. Formal approval by the program faculty was not noted in the Brief.