Evidentiary Statements & Formative Feedback

This document has been prepared to help guide EEQ CERT Reviewers in their comments.

Overall

Statements should be concise, yet communicate to the reader where the program is strong or not as strong in fulfilling the category/subcategory requirements. The guidance is to keep the supporting statements (including evidentiary statements and formative feedback) to **no more than 500 words**.

Comments made in the review process feed through the system and are presented for use in the Feedback Report that goes to programs. As such, when making comments within the Armature system, **please write in the third person and take care to use proper grammar and sentence structure**.

Formative vs. Summative Feedback

One distinction between formative feedback and summative feedback was made in Rick Stiggins' foundational article (2002) about this distinction. To paraphrase Stiggins' distinction between assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning, the following may be a good way to think of providing feedback to EEQ CERT applicants: The crucial distinction is between feedback to determine the status of the application and feedback to suggest ideas that may have the potential to help improve the program.

EEQ CERT reviews carry aspects of both kinds of feedback. A program's presented evidence may not constitute sufficient rigor or close-the-loop processes or any of a number of other aspects that should be part of a certified program. In which case, review *of* the program results in a summative determination that the program is not ready to be certified.

On the other hand, whether in a review denying certification or a review recommending certification, formative feedback can and should be provided. For denied programs, best practice dictates suggestions for improvement — the institution deserves feedback on how to improve its program. Even for programs granted certification, if Reviewers have ideas and suggestions of potential benefit, best practice again calls for sharing such information.

Below is guidance on both <u>writing to the evidence</u> and <u>providing formative feedback</u>.

Writing to the Evidence

When a program submits its portfolio or other review materials, it will have provided a number of facts, based in presented evidence. The job of the evaluator is to review carefully all of the facts and evidence and score the Category or Subcategory. Once the evaluator has made this determination, statements must be written to support the evaluation decision.

The statements should adhere to the following standards to ensure that the decision is adequately supported by the facts.

- **Statements should be concise, yet communicate to the reader where the program is strong or not as strong in fulfilling the category/subcategory requirements**. The guidance is to keep the supporting statements (including evidentiary statements and formative feedback) to no more than 500 words.

- **Statements should be grounded in the evidence presented**. When making an assertion, draw upon the evidence provided in the program's narrative and/or supporting documents.

- **It is important to base your decision on the evidence that is provided and not how you would do it if it were your program**. Reviewers should respect that programs may have their own ways of doing things that satisfies the requirements of the category/subcategory but may not be what the reviewer would do.

- **Maintain a positive attitude toward the review, no matter how poorly you feel the program is doing in that area**. It is important to objectively identify the strengths while also being clear on areas of opportunity for further development.

- **Include formative feedback, such as resources that the program might access to help strengthen the particular category/subcategory or quality of evidence.** The programs are looking to the reviewers to share relevant expertise to help them fully develop their capacity for providing a curriculum oriented toward employment.

A general approach is as follows:

- The first or topic statement should be a general statement that sets the context.

- The next statements should contain very specific examples, based in the evidence and documentation provided, that support the topic statement. This should also include some very specific ways that the program could better respond to the category/subcategory (formative feedback).

- The final sentence should provide a general conclusion

Example: Subcategory 1.B states: All students have multiple opportunities to apply learning in work-relevant contexts (such as but not limited to: applied projects, capstones, simulations, case studies, internships, fieldwork, experiential activities, work-site projects, etc.). A potential evidence-based response statement might be:

> The syllabi links show that there are multiple opportunities for students to apply learning in work-relevant contexts.[1] For example, all new students complete SOSC 111 and SOSC 113 during their first year; these courses provide students early exposure to workplace settings. It is primarily ethnographic in nature, but students still have access to the workplace. In addition, all students complete a required internship. However, beyond these two courses, there was no evidence provided that shows the variety of assignments throughout the program and their connection to the workplace. Providing this evidence would demonstrate more clearly that there is learning in work-relevant contexts across the curriculum and not just at the beginning and end.[2]
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> [1] *This is the topic sentence*
> [2] *This is the conclusion statement*

Providing Formative Feedback

As discussed above. Providing formative feedback is _____. There is, however, a determination to be made about *how much* and *what type* of formative feedback to provide. It is not the Reviewer's job to coach a program through every step of what should be done in terms of good practice. Nor is it the Reviewer's job to dig through the literature to cite useful resources to help guide a program in making good-practice decisions.

But don't withhold ideas based on your experience of what might be helpful given what you've learned about the program.

In providing such feedback, qualifying things with words like "might" and "potentially" seems good practice. You're not intimately familiar with all the details and the situation with the program, in spite of what you've learned reading the application materials. For instance, "Something that might help in addressing this issue could be _____," is much more collegial than a dismissive statement wondering why the administrators have not thought to do _____.

Below are some general guidelines:

- **Collegiality is important.** Tone of voice and overall approach in commentary is important. Those who prepare applications are professional postsecondary educators and deserve that respect, so feedback itself should be professional, concise, and helpful.

It should also be collegial: the point of the feedback is colleague-to-colleague sharing in service to program improvements. A welcoming tone will be appreciated.

- **Be specific (1).** When providing what you hope will be helpful feedback, don't be vague — providing a concrete example that illustrates the point you're making will be appreciated.

- **Be specific (2).** Reviewers should provide specific references (cite articles, provide links) to resources that relate to the advice being given.

- **Be specific (3).** If your feedback involves a "does not meet" rating, be specific about why. For instance, if lack of evidence is the reason, state that clearly *and* identify the specific kinds of evidence that could be presented as good evidence.

- **Review process recommendations.** Each Reviewer will have idiosyncratic working methods, so take the following with a grain of salt:

  - Keep track of ideas and questions as you go along, even during an initial reading of a section of the application. As labyrinthine as the connections and overlaps are in a higher education program, a thought sparked and then a "mental note made" to come back to that place to make a comment risks losing the initial thought. Devise a system to notate as you read, even on the first pass.

  - Keep the graduate and the graduate's capabilities in mind. If you're not reasonably sure a graduate would have developed a capacity as a result of the evidence presented, for instance, that's an indication to check again and/or request more information. One way to do this is to run through the overview list of EEQ CERT's outcomes to find outcomes related to the capacity you're unsure grads might possess.

  - There is one opportunity for Reviewers to raise questions and ask for additional information prior to completing the review. This is the time for requests for additional information. Typically, this happens when the Reviewer suspects a program has at hand information that would help substantiate its alignment with a particular aspect of certification. Ad hoc requests should be avoided.

References

Stiggins, R. (2002, March 13). Assessment for learning. *Education Week, 21*(26), 30, 32-33. Retrieved December 31, 2019, from https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2002/03/13/26stiggins.h21.html