

**Texas Education Agency Division of Educator Standards
Five Year Compliance Review
University of Houston - Victoria
Victoria, Texas
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Background Information

TAC Rule: 228.10 - Approval Process

According to the University of Houston-Victoria's (UHV) opening presentation and their website, in the decade of the 60's, it became obvious to the citizens of the Victoria area that greater opportunities were needed in higher education. No institution within a 110-mile radius offered baccalaureate and master's degrees. There were many junior college students and graduates in the region who wanted to continue study beyond the associate degree, and a growing number of people who had bachelor's degrees were anxious to pursue master's degrees. In 1973, about 100 students entered the newly opened University of Houston Victoria Center. In April 1983, Senate Bill 235 was passed by the Texas Legislature. The center became the University of Houston-Victoria, one of four institutions in the University of Houston system, with permanent status as a degree-granting university. The student population has grown to approximately 3,200 students.

The primary role of the university at this time is to provide upper-level and graduate instruction to students within the Coastal Bend region. There are plans to extend the programs downward to add freshmen and sophomore courses in the near future. Currently, the university honors 2+2 transfer agreements with Blinn College, Coastal Bend College, Houston Community College, The Victoria College, and Wharton Junior College. The university offers bachelor's, master's and professional certification degree programs in Education and Human Development, Business Administration, Arts and Sciences and Nursing. UHV is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Prior to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) visit, University of Houston-Victoria submitted a self-report which addressed all required components.

Number and Roles of People Interviewed

A total of forty-six (46) people were interviewed. At the Victoria site, three (3) advisory committee members, four (4) members of the program staff, nine (9) members of the college staff, three (3) field supervisors, six (6) cooperating teachers, and three (3) student teachers were interviewed. Because of the distance and number of student teachers and cooperating teachers at the Cinco Ranch teaching site, with permission of the Dean, Dr. Mary Natividad, electronic questionnaires were provided to the cooperating and student teachers which matched the questionnaires used in the face-to-face interviews in Victoria. Of the twenty (29) student teachers emailed at the Cinco

Ranch site, fourteen (14) responded. Of the 29 cooperating teachers identified at the Cinco Ranch site, ten (10) responded. In the Victoria interviews, it should be noted that the student teachers had only begun their second class assignments on Monday, March 9th. As such, the cooperating teachers had only limited time to work with their new student teachers.

Component I. Entity Commitment and Collaboration

§228.20 - Governance, Design, and Delivery of Educator Preparation Programs

Findings

University of Houston-Victoria (UHV) indicates that it has three locations, the University of Houston-Victoria campus and two other teaching sites located in Sugarland and Cinco Ranch (Katy, Texas). The program is governed by the UHV administrative structure and faculty can teach at all locations. Approximately 405 students are enrolled in the undergraduate program. Fifty-eight (58) of those are currently participating in student teaching.

The UHV Advisory Committee is composed of six (6) members. Document review indicated that two (2) members represent community colleges; two (2) members represent school districts, one (1) member represents business and community, and one (1) member represents colleges and universities. Two chairs and the Dean from University of Houston Victoria also sit on the Advisory Committee. The advisory committee members are from the Ft. Bend and Victoria areas. The university developed at its inception an Educator Preparation Advisory Council Constitution which provides guidelines for the committee's operation. The Advisory Committee met in January 2009 and is planning other meetings in April and August or September, 2009. Interviews with advisory committee members indicated that the committee meets about once a quarter. Agendas, minutes and sign-in sheets from previous meetings were available for review.

Advisory Committee members reported in interviews that UHV was committed to responding to community concerns, was technologically advanced and had an open line of communication between the university and school districts which created a "hometown" atmosphere. One member indicated he presented effective interviewing technique sessions for the teacher candidates.

The University of Houston - Victoria is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.20 - Governance of Educator Preparation Programs.

Component II. Admission Criteria

§ 227.10 - Admission Criteria

Findings

UHV School of Education and Human Development has two hired recruiters to assist in recruitment efforts. The recruiters work with the community colleges to make their students aware of the educational opportunities at UHV. The recruiters hold several events including community college transfer days where information is shared regarding the transferrable credits from the lower level college to UHV. The UHV recruiters meet with school district administration to target specific groups for teacher recruitment. The

recruiters also attend educator conferences and approach churches and the Latino Forum in order to seek out diverse ethnic participation. The Cinco Ranch recruiter has purchased an email list of executives in their area to contact about the opportunities available at UHV. Open houses, job fairs, and word of mouth are also avenues of attracting students into the program. In addition, UHV makes extensive use of the media in the form of radio and television commercials. Within the education building itself, information about various educational programs is available outside the School of Education and Human Development office.

To be admitted to the educator preparation program, students must complete 54 hours of lower division coursework with a grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 toward their degree. They also must have a 2.5 GPA in courses toward their teacher certification. In addition, the students are required to have a 2.5 GPA in nine semester hours of lower division English. The student must show proficiency in basic skills by passing all parts of the Texas Higher Education Assessment (THEA) or Texas Success Initiative (TSI), complete a background check, submit an application which is reviewed by the Teacher Education Records Office. If all criteria are met, a degree plan is created and approved by student, faculty advisor, certification officer, dean of the school, and the university registrar. The admission criteria are published in The University of Houston-Victoria Catalog and UHV Student Handbook. In reviewing a sampling of student folders, it was found that a signed application, degree plan, and record of test scores were present. It was discovered that currently no formal pre-admission interviews are conducted.

Interviews with program staff indicate that students' files are kept under secure conditions, with some documents stored electronically. The official transcripts and fee receipts are stored electronically. It was indicated that the electronic storage would be expanded in the future. Program documents are retained for five years. E-mail is the official communication for the students at UHV. Each student is issued a university email address upon enrollment. Program correspondence is disseminated through the Webct system.

The University of Houston, Victoria is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §227.10 - Admission Criteria.

Component III. Curriculum

§228.30 Educator Preparation Curriculum

Findings

The School of Education and Human Development is approved to offer courses leading to twenty (20) certification areas. Currently, the list does not include the certification for Generalist EC-6.

In reviewing the resumes of the faculty, it was discovered that thirteen (13) of the seventeen (17) faculty members are certified Texas teachers as well as are all eleven (11) field supervisors. All seventeen members of the faculty hold advanced degrees, are published, and have numerous years of experience preparing new teachers.

In reviewing the course material, it was found that the UHV faculty had correlated the seventeen (17) identified curriculum areas identified in TAC rule with their course

offerings. This was done by an in-depth study of each course to identify where the seventeen (17) areas are covered. In addition, it was discovered that in many of the course syllabi, information on the appropriate Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), domains, standards, and Texas Examination of Educator Standards (TExES) exams relevance was provided. A random sampling of the course syllabi revealed that a variety of instructional and evaluative methods are being used by the faculty. The UHV courses are delivered through face-to-face interaction, online, or a hybrid of online and face-to-face meetings. The variety of delivery methods is in response to the diverse needs of their students. The online courses have been developed by the UHV faculty. Technical support is supplied by two full-time technicians. Not only do they attend to technical needs but also provide the faculty with support in effectively translating their content area to the online format.

In a sample of course requirements, the Generalist EC-4 and the Generalist 4-8 are broken up into four blocks. To advance to the next block of courses, the candidate must pass a university- created qualifying exam with a score of seventy-five percent (75%) or higher. According to supplied documents, Block 1 is learner-focused with the goal of introducing teacher candidates to instructional design, child development and literacy development. Block 2 focuses on social/emotional development and reading instruction and assessment. Block 3, which is content-focused, gives candidates the opportunity to learn the most current methodology for teaching social studies, science, math, reading and writing. Block 4, student teaching, is performance-based. It immerses candidates in the real work of teachers in school settings. The Professional Development Seminar meets six times during the course of the twelve (12) week student teaching.

In interviews with student teachers, it was noted that the pedagogy that was taught in the educator preparation program did not address the real life circumstances that confronted the student teachers in the classroom. In addition, both cooperating and student teachers felt the scheduling of the student teaching experience was somewhat artificial. Student teachers entering the classroom, especially at mid-year, did not experience classroom preparation, establishment of classroom routines, or the process of setting behavior expectations. It is suggested that every student be provided opportunities to assist teachers during the first three weeks of school in order to be aware of the complexities of starting the first days of school. Equally important is participating in the closing activities of the school year. In addition, the student teachers indicated that while they were encouraged to use the latest technology in the classroom, the direct instruction on how to use the technology was not taught. Fifty percent (50%) of the responding student teachers at Cinco Ranch felt that they were not taught how to prepare for or conduct a parent conference. In concert with that, the teachers needed practice preparing written communications such as progress reports and comments on report cards. In addition, seventy-one percent (71%) indicated they need more assistance in classroom management strategies.

The University of Houston-Victoria is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.30 - Educator Preparation Curriculum.

Commendations

The University of Houston Victoria faculty is to be commended for taking the initiative in conducting an intensive and in-depth review of their curriculum in light of the addition of the seventeen (17) specific areas of instruction mandated by rule.

Component IV. Program Delivery and Evaluation

§228.40- Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement

Findings

The faculty indicated in interviews that they use Accountability System for Educator Preparation (ASEP), TExES exam scores and other data to determine areas of curriculum creation or modification. In an effort keep the program relevant, the initial certification faculty rigorously evaluates course offerings every five years. The Provost's Office sends the faculty a series of questions to guide the evaluation of the entire education program as well as each individual course. The evaluation scrutinizes course content, instructional strategies, delivery, and assessment scores.

Students are required to complete at least forty-five (45) hours of field-based observations. These observations are divided into three of the blocks of instruction and are directed specifically at the content of that block. Students are required to keep an observation log, journals, and report on their classroom experiences. In addition students can share their experiences through reflections, portfolios, simulations, blogs, webquests and other technological experiences. During the observations, the students are directed to specifically observe teaching strategies, content delivery, developmental stages of the students, and classroom management. Field based experiences are designed to expose the students to a diverse student population in a variety of educational settings. The observation log serves as a record of the state required number of classroom observation hours.

Each student's progress is benchmarked through a series of university developed tests which are designed to match the state certification test standards. They must be passed with a 75% score before the student can move to the next block of instruction. These tests are designed to help the student and the staff determine areas of strengths and weaknesses of the student. During Block 4, the students participate in twelve (12) weeks of full day student teaching. Students are matched with the cooperating teachers by the school principal. The principals have been advised to seek cooperating teachers who have at least three years teaching experience, good evaluations, perceived as leaders on the campus, and are strong classroom instructors. In Victoria ISD, the cooperating teachers are trained with the Texas Educator Beginning Support System (TxBeSS) material and a district level mentor is identified to assist the student teacher as well as an UHV Field Supervisor. Sixty percent (60%) of the cooperating teachers responding to the questionnaire from the Cinco Ranch area indicated that they had not been provided training to prepare or assist them in their role of cooperating teacher. All UHV sites indicated that several attempts were made to have the cooperating teachers attend training sessions. A meeting was scheduled for the cooperating teachers, student teachers, and field supervisors. Very few teachers from Victoria ISD attended and no cooperating teachers outside the Victoria service area attended. Cooperating teachers who could not attend were asked to read the Mentor Teacher's Handbook located on the UHV School of Education and Human Development (SEHD) website. In addition, the field supervisors were requested to go over this material with the cooperating teacher on their first visit to the student teacher. A colorful professionally prepared brochure was given to the student teachers to give to their cooperating teachers. In addition to the handbook on the website, a voice over slide presentation is available. There is a

University contract between the participating school district which is updated annually. The cooperating teacher receives an agreement letter which outlines their roles and responsibilities. It is suggested that completing mentor training be added to the letter of agreement as one of their responsibilities.

University of Houston-Victoria is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.40 - Assessment and Evaluation of Candidates for Certification and Program Improvement.

Component V. On-Going Support

§228.35 - On-Going Educator Preparation Program Support

Findings

According to the self-report, any student, experiencing difficulty or not, in the education program may seek additional assistance and support through the School of Education Center for Academic Excellence. The Center provides academic support, tutorials (both online and face-to-face), and test taking strategies.

The field supervisors conduct six formal observations or five if the student teacher is extremely competent. The field supervisors utilize two forms when making formal observations of the student teachers. The formal student observation form evaluates each domain using the Professional Development and Appraisal System (PDAS) scale to simulate actual teacher observation conducted by the principal. The informal observation form provides recommendations specific to instructional strategies, classroom organization and management, presentation of subject matter, creating a motivating and supportive learning environment, and professional responsibilities and growth. The field supervisors conduct a pre-conference during the first two weeks of the student teaching assignment and also conduct a post-conference during the last week of student teaching. Additional visits are scheduled on an as needed basis for students struggling in their student teaching experience.

Field supervisors are provided support through the Director of Field Experience. He is available on an as needed basis. In interviews with the field supervisors, it was indicated that structure and procedures needed to be clearly defined. Formal training was requested by the field supervisors to determine their specific responsibilities, expectations for them and for the student teachers.

University of Houston, Victoria is in compliance with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §228.35 - On-Going Educator Preparation Program Support

Program Recommendations

* Continue over the course of the next year to dissect the School of Education and Human Development curriculum content to define what discrete items are being taught in which course and ensure that all major items are addressed.

* Apply for Generalist EC-6 certification as soon as possible.

* Seek creative ways to offer cooperating teacher training and appreciation by the

beginning of the fall 2009 semester.

- * Explore ways to place student teachers in a more realistic teaching environment at critical points of the school year by the fall 2009 semester.

- * Provide formal training for field supervisors beginning with the fall 2009 semester.

- * Review classroom technology explanations in each course to go beyond the explanation of the importance of the use of technology and include how to physically use the technology. This should begin with the fall 2009 semester.

- * Investigate and initiate an interview process for candidates entering the program beginning with the fall 2009 semester.