

The Unit Assessment System

The professional teaching program of the SOE is designed to prepare candidates to demonstrate the professional knowledge, skills and dispositions for beginning teachers that are explicated in the *INTASC Model Standards for Beginning Teacher Licensure and Support* and the *Rhode Island Beginning Teacher Standards*. The program enables candidates to:

- Understand the historical and social context of education in the United States and the impact of that context on educational opportunities and outcomes for pupils in U.S. schools.
- Prepare all pupils to be able to think critically and act to a high degree of intellectual complexity.
- Understand and apply theories of cognition and child development to create many pathways to learning.
- Understand and apply instructional models based on theories of cognition and development.
- Assess pupil learning through a variety of approaches.
- Use data from assessments of learning, including standardized assessments of achievement, to design and structure instruction to meet the identified needs of all pupils in their classrooms.
- Identify and access the diversity of experiences and perspectives that students bring to learning environments, using this knowledge to match learning opportunities to the needs of individual children.

Development in the program is assessed in four broad domains, identified by the Holmes Group (1986) and supported by the knowledge bases as crucial to good teaching practice. These are:

- Effective communication and interpersonal relationships
- An academic knowledge base consisting of a broad foundation and deep knowledge of the central concepts, principles, and tools of inquiry in a discipline
- Pedagogical knowledge bases, including content pedagogy and
- Ability to assure learning for diverse learners.

Assessment in these domains is both formative and summative, with summative assessments occurring at key decision points in the program. Development of the assessment system has led to increasing coherence within and between programs. This coherence is manifest in the [curriculum maps](#) prepared for each program. An overview of the decision points, tasks assessed and domain assessed within each task and point is provided in Figure 1.

Commitment to Technology: The role of technology in the teacher education programs has been enhanced through the infusion of resources provided by the [Rhode Island Teachers in Technology](#) (RITTI), [Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology](#) (PT3), and New Order Multi-Modal Advanced-Design Classrooms (NOMAD). These grants have brought up to date training to faculty and teachers in the schools. Outcome-based tasks have recently been revised to ensure that candidates graduating the programs demonstrate their mastery of the use of technology in instruction. The Unit Plan- Content Pedagogy is an example from the Secondary Education Program.

Our most recent grant, NOMAD, will allow URI to create a context of consistent access to current hardware, software, and models of effective use of technology for instruction that are appropriate for pre-K through 12 education. The context is both physical — 21 classrooms and 4 auditoria in 10 buildings on 3 campuses — and virtual — software, Web services, social software, online learning, remote experimentation and visualization, scientific probes and other lab instrumentation, proprietary

software created at URI, supported by the necessary network connections and display technologies to extend learning opportunities both in and out of the classroom. The context is also supported by mobile technology: PDAs, iPods, personal response systems ("classroom clickers"), and laptops. Taken together — physical, virtual, and mobile — it's clear the URI project will support "nomadic learning," the learning style of the "Net Generation."

The Unit Assessment System for the School of Education, the Professional Education Unit at the University of Rhode Island, is set up to provide for the collection and analyses of data relative to candidate performance and unit operations. The purpose of this data collection is two fold to evaluate the progress of program candidates and to improve programs at both the initial and advanced levels. Through the Unit Assessment System we collect data within and across programs for analyses. The unit assessment analyzes data on unit operations and the aggregated data on candidate performance. These data are used to measure unit effectiveness and promote program improvement.

Unit Assessment System Processes

Data from candidate assessments and on unit operations are examined by Program Assessment Committees and the Unit Assessment Committee (made up of a representative from each program), also known as the Council for Teacher Education. The School of Education's Unit Assessment System is outlined in Figure 1 at the end of this document. These committees review aggregated data on candidate performance and data on unit operations. These data are used to make judgments about program and unit effectiveness. Each Program Committee approves a Program Assessment Plan that specifies assessments for examining individual performance at various transition points across each program to make judgments about candidate progress through programs. The 2004 NCATE SPA program review process serves as a model for this plan and is represented in Table 1 listed below.

The program level and unit level assessments are linked to provide a consistent and rich level of data for review. The program level critical performance assessments and follow-up data from programs (e.g., graduate surveys, exit surveys) serve as data for unit level assessments. The program level assessments are moving toward common formats to provide common data for aggregation:

1. Licensure assessment, or other content-based assessment
2. Content-based assessment
3. Assessment of candidate ability to plan instruction
4. Assessment of internship, practicum, or other clinical experience
5. Assessment of candidate effect on student learning
6. Additional assessment SPA or program based
7. Additional assessment SPA or program based (optional)
8. Additional assessment SPA or program based (optional)

A report at the program and unit level is written analyzing the data from assessments above (1-8). The report represents how the data are used to improve both candidate performance and program quality. This description, while based on individual assessments (1-8), is a summary of findings, the faculty's interpretations, and changes made at the program and unit levels. Each report describes the steps program faculty have taken to use information from assessments to improve both candidate performance and the program outcomes. This information should be organized around (1) content knowledge, (2) pedagogical and professional knowledge, skill, and dispositions, and (3) effects on student learning and on creating environments that support learning.

It is the responsibility of the NCATE Coordinator and the Unit Assessment Committee to coordinate follow-up surveys for candidates and employers, common critical performance tasks, training and technical studies to ensure reliable and valid data.

System Components Figure 1 identifies the relationship of programs to the unit during the assessment process. Central to this process is the collection of data from program and unit assessments, a data management system, unit and program assessment committees, the council of teacher education, an assessment coordinator and the unit head.

Unit Operations and Program Assessments are intended to systematically collect data central to the operation of units and programs. For the unit this includes data on:

1. Advisement – e.g., program, career
2. Instruction – e.g., teaching, evaluation, clinical experiences, course logistics
3. Records – e.g., programs of study, check sheets, licensure
4. Resources – e.g., facilities, personnel, equipment/technology, funding
5. Faculty Matters—e.g., workload, evaluation/performance reviews, diversity, development, voice
6. Candidate Matters – e.g., diversity, complaints, student groups, communications
7. Staff Matters – e.g., diversity, workload, evaluation/performance reviews, development, and voice
8. Organization—e.g., governance, management, climate

Individual programs also collect data to help in the assessment of candidates and of programs themselves. Data include:

1. Learning Products— based on institutional, state and professional society standards, professional knowledge/skills/dispositions and impact on student learning, and specified proficiencies (e.g. candidates' portfolio tasks).
2. Transition Points – Individual candidate records on pre-specified program transition points (e.g., program admission or exit)
3. Program Components – learning products aggregated by courses, field experiences, and other such curricular elements (e.g. aggregated performances in a capstone course).
4. Post-Program Assessments – follow-up surveys of program completers and their employers as well as results from state licensure tests and external reviews (e.g., Rhode Island state program reviews).

The Data Management System is the system by which information is collected for data analyses and report writing. The core of this system is an electronic portfolio system (efolio) that is presently utilized by the elementary, secondary, early childhood, music, physical education, and library media. We are presently under contract with [True Outcomes](#) and have standardized our critical performance tasks, evaluation instruments, and follow-up instruments in this system. We have met our goal in having data entry automated, and have connected TrueOutcomes to the university PeopleSoft system for student information acquisition.

Table 1. Program Assessments - (Specialization in _____ Education)

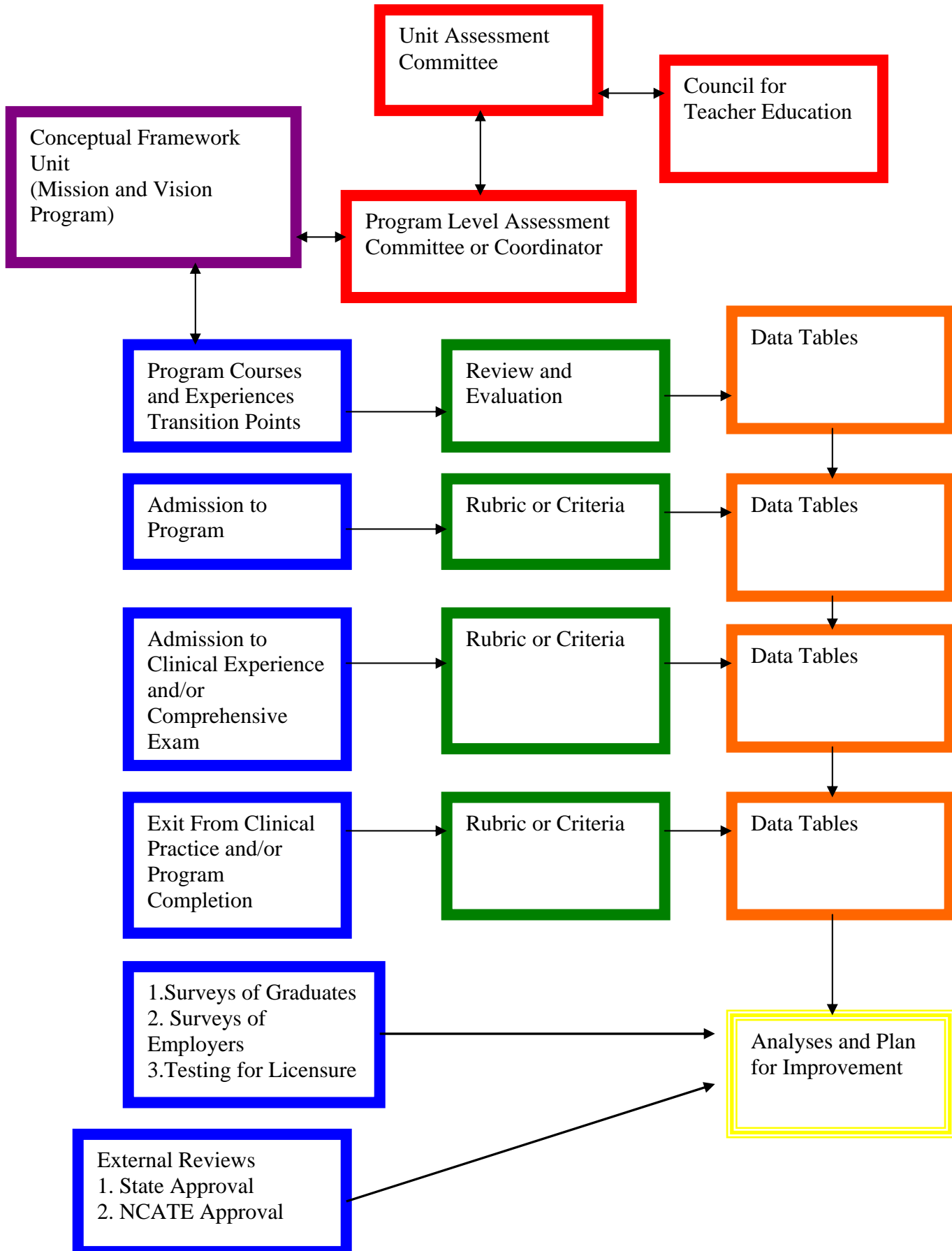
Name of Assessment	RIBTS/ Graduate Themes	Type or Form of Assessment	When the Assessment Is Administered	Attachments		
				Assessment	Scoring Guides/ Criteria	Data Table
1. [Licensure assessment, or other content-based assessment]	RIBTS 1& 2 Grad Themes #1 Content #5 Prof. Devel.					
2. [Content-based assessment]	RIBTS 1 &2 Grad Themes #1 Content					
3. [Assessment of candidate ability to plan instruction]	RIBTS 3, 4, 5 & 9 Grad Theme #6 Prof. Practice					
4. [Assessment of internship, practicum, or other clinical experience]	RIBTS 1-10 Grad Theme #6 Prof. Practice					
5. [Assessment of candidate effect on student learning]	RIBTS 3 & 4 Grad Theme #3 Diverse Learning					
6. [Additional assessment]	Misc RIBTS Grad Theme #4 Research					
7. [Additional assessment]	Misc RIBTS Grad Theme# 2 Leadership					
8. Additional assessment (optional)						

Use of Assessment Results to Improve Candidate and Program Performance

Evidence must be presented in this section that assessment results have been analyzed and have been or will be used to improve candidate performance and strengthen the program. This description should not link improvements to individual assessments but, rather, it should summarize principal findings from the evidence, the faculty's interpretation of those findings, and changes made in (or planned for) the program as a result.

Describe the steps program faculty has taken to use information from assessments for improvement of both candidate performance and the program. This information should be organized around (1) content knowledge, (2) pedagogical and professional knowledge, skill, and dispositions, and (3) effects on student learning and on creating environments that support learning.

Figure 1 Unit Assessment: University of Rhode Island



The University of Rhode Island Benchmark Assessment Plan

Transition Checkpoint Assessments for School of Education Initial Candidates

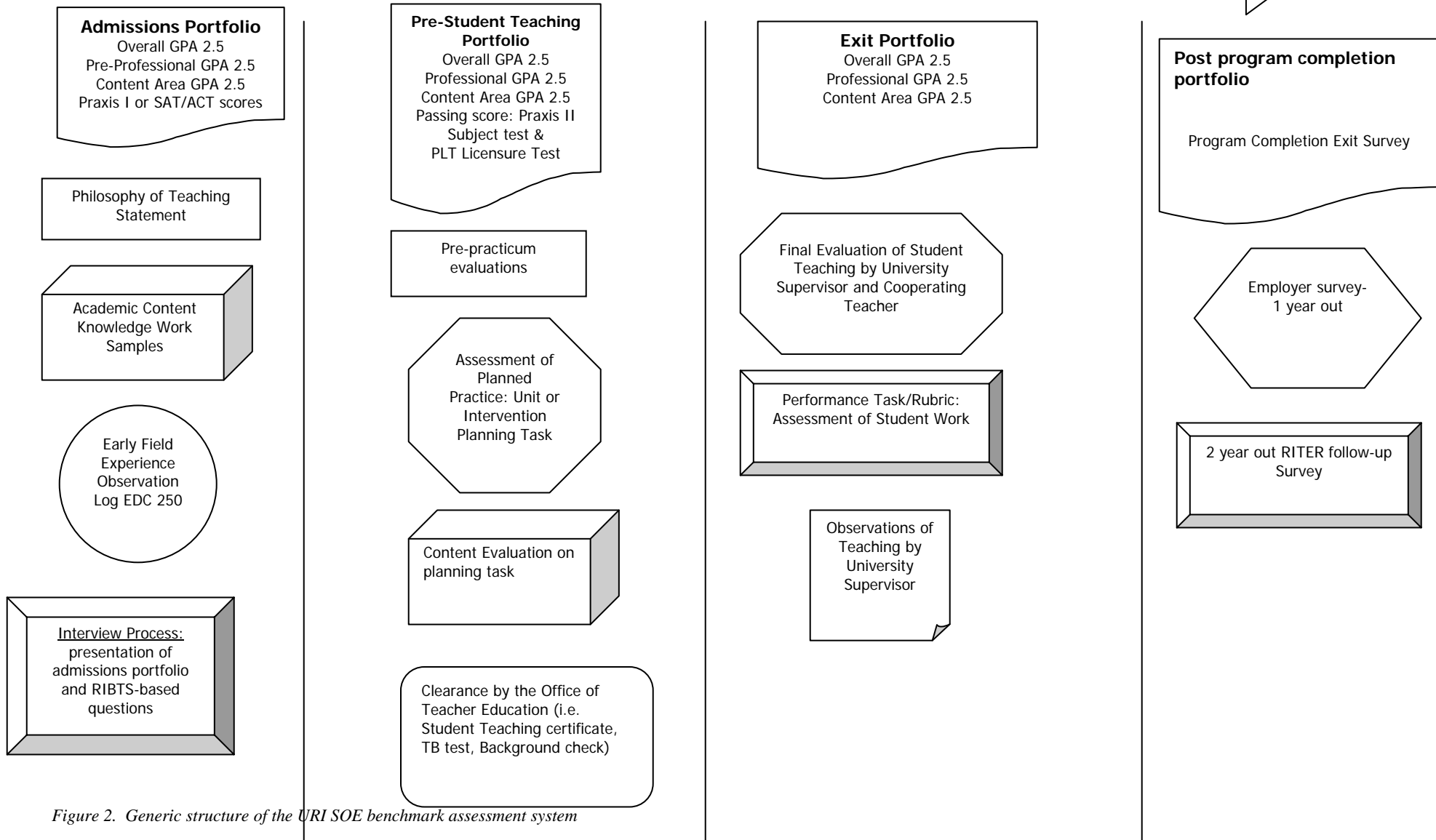


Figure 2. Generic structure of the URI SOE benchmark assessment system