



Our Lady of the Lake University
 San Antonio, Texas
 Education Department



2010 OVERALL TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAM DESIGN

The overall design of those standards for which we could evaluate is poor, with preparation of elementary teacher candidates in particular needing urgent attention. Most troubling is the quality of the curriculum provided to elementary and special education teacher candidates in how to teach reading. Because some of the data that we collect is drawn from public sources, we always ask the institution to verify the accuracy and currency of what we have collected. Our Lady of the Lake University declined to review and comment.

Admission Standards

1. Admits teacher candidates with strong academic records ●
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- The standards for admission either into the institution or its teacher preparation program should select teacher candidates from only the top half of the college population.
Because Our Lady of the Lake University is only rated as “selective” by U.S. News and World Report, NCTQ also checked the entrance criteria for admission into its Education Department. Unfortunately, the department’s standards are not high enough, only requiring candidates to meet the state’s minimum cut-scores on the THEA (a test of college readiness).

Elementary Teacher Program

2. Prepares teacher candidates to teach reading
- a. Extent to which the science of reading is covered ○
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- The research-based content proven to be necessary for teaching all children to read should be clearly evident in course materials such as lecture topics, assignments and textbooks.
The institution fails to meet this standard because the program does not provide preparation in the science of reading. Neither class lectures nor textbooks address the reading science. We identified two required textbooks that did not address the science of reading.
- b. Adherence to science of reading throughout coursework NA
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- All of an institution’s required reading courses — not just some courses — should impart the research-based content that is necessary for teaching all children to read.
Because we could discern no evidence of the science of reading being taught in either a single comprehensive course or in a combination of multiple courses (see standard #2a), any further rating on this standard is irrelevant.

Ratings: ● Meets standard ● Nearly meets standard ● Partly meets standard ● Meets a small part of standard ○ Fails to meet standard
 ? Data insufficient for a final rating ⊘ Data withheld despite request NA Not applicable 2011 Evaluation pending NR Not rated

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- 3. Prepares teacher candidates to teach mathematics** ⊗
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- Teacher candidates, even those who excel in math, generally require three semesters of coursework in order to progress from a procedural to a conceptual understanding of the essential mathematics topics taught in the elementary grades. *Despite a request directly to the Education Department, the syllabi necessary to evaluate mathematics preparation were not provided.*
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- 4. Educates teacher candidates in the broad content areas relevant to elementary teaching** ○
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- Because they cannot teach what they do not know, teacher candidates need to have a solid grasp of literature and composition; American history, world history, art history and music history; geography; and science. *The institution does not meet this standard because neither the institution nor its teacher preparation program appears to ensure sufficient coverage in the literature, world history, world geography, art history and music history content elementary teachers need. We note course requirements in other essential content areas, including composition and American history.*
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- 5. Requires an area of concentration so that teacher candidates develop content expertise and have a second career option** ⊙
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- Teacher candidates should develop some expertise outside of their professional studies, not only to enrich their own academic experience, but also to serve as a fallback major in the event that the student teaching experience goes poorly. *The institution only partially meets this standard because we could find no evidence of any sort of subject matter concentration, save three English courses. Should a teacher candidate fail student teaching, she would face well more than an additional semester's work to be able to graduate under a non-education major.*
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- 6. Offers all required courses at least once a year** ●
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- It must be possible to complete the requisite program in a timely manner. *The institution fully meets this standard because it offers all required courses each year.*
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- 7. Prepares teacher candidates for the profession** ?
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- The well-documented ineffectiveness of first year teachers may be mitigated by professional preparation that includes coursework on classroom management, methods for teaching specific content and diverse learners, child development, assessment and data driven instruction, and how education policy challenges affect practice. *Because we could only gain access to course descriptions for this standard rather than syllabi, we did not rate this standard. However, we were able to complete an accurate count of the credit hours in professional coursework that the institution requires, and it appears to be well above typical counts. The institution requires 63 hours of professional coursework (not including student teaching), exceeding the generous upper bound of 50 credits that should be sufficient. Furthermore, in spite of this count, we believe we are able to identify key professional topics inadequately addressed in this sequence, such as 1) mathematics methods and 2) education policy challenges.*
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- 8. Student teaching effectively prepares teacher candidates for the challenges of the classroom** 2011
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- Although there are a number of characteristics that define a high quality student teaching program, at a minimum a full-time, full-semester clinical experience is necessary. *The institution does not meet this minimal standard as it does not offer a full semester of full-time student teaching.*



Secondary Teacher Program

9. Prepares high school teacher candidates to teach their subject area(s) ●
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- All children deserve to have teachers who are well versed in each and every one of the subjects they teach, regardless of teacher shortages.
While most of the course requirements in the certification areas for secondary teachers appear to be sound, the institution only partially meets the standard because of an inadequate program design in social studies. Acknowledging that flawed state regulation is the principal culprit for the prevalence of poorly designed social studies preparation programs across the state, including here, the institution should not sanction a system that qualifies secondary teachers to teach multiple subject areas in social studies after having taken sufficient coursework in only one of these areas, history.
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10. Prepares middle school teacher candidates to teach their subject area(s) ●
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- All children deserve to have teachers who are well versed in each and every one of the subjects they teach, regardless of teacher shortages.
The institution only partially meets the standard because of a flawed program design for the "middle school subject specialist." The institution should not qualify a middle school teacher to teach science without requiring either a major in a science discipline or a combination of courses equivalent to a major that would include at least a minor in one discipline.
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11. Offers all required courses (high school certification) at least once a year ●
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- It must be possible to complete the requisite program in a timely manner.
The institution meets this standard because it offers all required courses each year.
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12. Prepares high school teacher candidates for the profession ?
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- The well-documented ineffectiveness of first year teachers may be mitigated by professional preparation that includes coursework on classroom management, methods for teaching specific content and diverse learners, adolescent development, assessment and data driven instruction, and how education policy challenges affect practice.
Because we could only gain access to course descriptions for this standard rather than syllabi, we did not rate this standard. However, our limited examination of course requirements and descriptions suggests that the institution potentially appears to give inadequate attention to a number of essential professional topics for the secondary teacher, most notably 1) subject-specific methods and 2) education policy challenges.
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13. Student teaching effectively prepares high school teacher candidates for the challenges of the classroom 2011
- + Rationale + Methodology + State findings
- Although there are a number of characteristics that define a high quality student teaching program, at a minimum a full-time, full-semester clinical experience is necessary.
The institution meets this minimal standard as it offers a full semester of full-time student teaching.

Ratings: ● Meets standard ● Nearly meets standard ● Partly meets standard ● Meets a small part of standard ○ Fails to meet standard
 ? Data insufficient for a final rating ⊘ Data withheld despite request NA Not applicable 2011 Evaluation pending NR Not rated

Special Education Teacher Program

14. Prepares teacher candidates to teach early reading ○

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

All special education teachers, regardless of whether they are teaching toddlers or teenagers, need coursework in the research-based strategies shown to dramatically reduce the number of children needing remediation in reading. *The institution fails to meet the standard because the program does not provide preparation in the science of reading. Neither class lectures nor textbooks address the reading science.*

15. Prepares teacher candidates to teach elementary mathematics ⊗

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Special education teachers, regardless of whether they are teaching toddlers or teenagers, generally need three semesters of coursework in order to progress from a procedural to a conceptual understanding of fundamental mathematics topics. *Despite a request directly to the Department of Education, the syllabi necessary to evaluate mathematics preparation were not provided.*

16. Offers all required courses at least once a year ●

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

It must be possible to complete the requisite program in a timely manner. *The institution meets this standard because all required courses are offered each year.*

Outcomes

17. Systematically seeks and uses feedback on graduates from school districts ○

18. Utilizes available data systems to monitor performance of graduates ○

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Mirroring a similar commitment now found in K-12 education, higher education institutions must embrace data driven decision making and accountability in preparing teachers. *The institution does not meet these standards. In our survey of local school districts that hire the institution's graduates, the Northside Independent School District responded that the institution does not regularly request any data regarding the job performance of graduates or the performance of graduates' students.*

Institutional Features

19. Assigns faculty to teach in their area of expertise ●

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

Only the most extreme examples of unsuitable assignments are noted, such as an instructor teaching both reading and mathematics methods. *The institution meets this standard as we could find no evidence of faculty being inappropriately assigned.*



20. Offers grade-span specific coursework as appropriate ●

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

A single class with curriculum addressing students from preschoolers to high school seniors cannot adequately prepare both elementary and secondary teacher candidates in areas such as classroom management or instructing students with disabilities. *The institution only partially meets this standard as we could find evidence of single courses designed to teach both elementary and secondary candidates on topics benefiting from age-specific approaches (e.g., SPED 4338 Individual Differences).*

21. Ensures that teacher candidates are prepared to teach in a global society NR

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The world has shrunk. Recognition of that fact should pervade the campus. *Because this standard is still in a developmental phase, we do not provide an institutional rating and our findings should only be viewed as exploratory. We note that 3-4 credit hours of foreign language or multicultural understanding coursework is required, but did not find education-focused study abroad programs, nor do foreign students comprise a significant proportion of the institution's student body.*

Exit Standards

Either state licensure standards are adequate or the institution sets a higher standard for program completion than licensure requires

If the state fails to establish rigorous licensure requirements, institutions are still obligated to ensure that their graduates meet high standards. For example, if the state does not require a licensure test that measures candidates' knowledge of every subject taught, institutions must fill this vacuum.

22. Elementary (EC-4/EC-6) ○

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The institution does not meet this standard because it relies only on the state's licensing test, the TExES elementary generalist test, to determine if its elementary teacher candidates possess adequate knowledge of reading instruction, as well as content knowledge in four subject areas. This test is wholly inadequate—both because of its low level of rigor and the lack of separate cut-scores for each subject. Recognizing that action on the part of the state to remedy these deficiencies is needed, the institution could require a more meaningful test of reading instruction and insist that its teacher candidates pass assessments in each of four subject areas.

23. Middle School (Grades 4-8) ●

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The institution meets this standard because it only qualifies middle school teacher candidates for certification in areas for which the TExES licensing tests appear to be adequate.

24. Secondary (Grades 8-12) ●

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The institution does not fully meet this standard. Acknowledging that flawed state regulation is the principal culprit for the prevalence of poor design of some secondary programs across the state, the institution should not qualify secondary teacher candidates to teach multiple subjects by means of a "composite subjects" certification (e.g., preparing a teacher to teach "science" instead of chemistry, biology, physics and/or earth science). The institution could remedy the state's regulatory deficiency by requiring candidates to pass content assessments in each subject for exit.

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 ? Data insufficient for a final rating ⊘ Data withheld despite request NA Not applicable 2011 Evaluation pending NR Not rated

25. Special Education (EC-12) ○

[+ Rationale](#) [+ Methodology](#) [+ State findings](#)

The institution does not meet this standard because it relies on state licensing tests, either the TExES elementary generalist test or the special education test, to determine if its special education teacher candidates possess adequate knowledge of reading instruction, as well as content knowledge. These tests are wholly inadequate—both because of their low levels of rigor and their lack of separate cut-scores for each subject. Recognizing that action on the part of the state to remedy these deficiencies is needed, the institution could require a more meaningful test of reading instruction and insist that its teacher candidates pass assessments in each of four subject areas.

Accreditation:	NCATE	TEAC	None
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Number of Teachers (2009): 92 Low Producer

Data are from the Texas Education Agency.

Elementary:	56
Middle:	9
Secondary:	5
Special education:	22

[+ Statewide teacher production](#)

Opportunities for institution to respond: September 22, 2009; December 10, 2008; October 29, 2009; February 22, 2010

[+ More on communication](#)

Institution Comment: *The Texas Education Agency's SBEC and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) both report that NCTQ did not contact them for data. They are willing to send NCTQ the measures required by statute for accrediting university programs in Texas.*

In conclusion, the OLLU faculty and administration embrace accountability. However, given the discrepancy between NCTQ's criteria and methodology and the standards set by accrediting bodies, we are unable to participate in your study as designed. We appreciate the invitation to respond.

[+ NCTQ responds to institution comments](#)