



TEAC's evaluation of the *Brief*

TEAC evaluates the *Brief* in a sequence of five steps, each one dependent on, and informed by, the ones before it:

1. formative evaluation (optional, see www.teac.org for a description TEAC's services),
2. auditability decision by the lead auditor,
3. audit visit and audit report by the audit team,
4. summative evaluation and recommendation by the Accreditation Panel, and
5. accreditation decision by the Accreditation Committee.

Each step is based on a set of questions.

1. Formative evaluation

Is the program making a persuasive case for itself? Does the Brief include all the required elements? Is the language clear and precise?

The process of developing the *Inquiry Brief* or *Inquiry Brief Proposal* embodies the idea of continuous improvement. TEAC sees the *Brief* as a living document, so to speak, and consequently welcomes frequent consultation between the program faculty and TEAC about the *Brief*, particularly about effective approaches to substantiating the claims the program faculty makes. The TEAC staff sees its role as assisting the program faculty in making the best case possible that is consistent with the evidence the faculty has about its students' accomplishments and related claims. For this reason, and at the program's request, TEAC reviews draft *Briefs* and provides feedback and guidance and a range of services to those seeking accreditation. A key task of the TEAC staff's formative evaluation of the *Inquiry Brief* is checking the precision of the language and evidence.

2. Auditability decision

Is the Brief complete and ready to be audited?

When the program faculty is satisfied with the case it has made, it submits a final draft of the *Brief*, complete with a covering checklist. TEAC staff completes a similar checklist that certifies that the *Brief* contains all the features required for an audit. This certification is a simple precaution and raises the probability that the audit will have a satisfactory outcome for the program and TEAC. Only then is the audit scheduled (or, if scheduled through a state protocol, confirmed). At that point the form of the *Brief* is final and no changes, except minor editorial changes, are permitted. Any changes the program wishes to make after the *Brief* is declared auditable and the audit has begun are made through responses to the audit report.

3. Audit

Is the evidence in the Brief trustworthy?

Through the audit, TEAC verifies the evidence the faculty cites in the *Inquiry Brief* or *Inquiry Brief Proposal* in support of its claims.

The auditors determine whether or not the evidence in the *Brief* is trustworthy. To do so, the auditors need access to the raw data, spreadsheets and documents upon which the authors of the *Brief* relied in writing the *Brief*. The faculty should be prepared to show the TEAC auditors the data (records, journals, ratings, evaluations, transcripts, artifacts, etc.) that are portrayed in the *Brief*. A simple rule is: *if the authors needed to look at it, the auditors may also*. Because the TEAC auditors will try to verify as much of the *Brief* as can be practically managed from the TEAC's offices, the faculty may be asked to send the supporting source data (e.g., spreadsheets) to TEAC before the audit. By its very nature, a substantial portion of the audit, however, must be conducted on site.

Audit of the *Inquiry Brief*. The main purpose of the audit of an *Inquiry Brief* is to verify the evidence the program faculty have cited in support of their claims that the program meets TEAC's three quality principles. The auditors select samples of evidence that they predict will reveal and represent the totality of the evidence the program faculty has presented in the *Inquiry Brief*. The auditors are free to search for additional evidence in the process of the audit and these discoveries may support, strengthen, or weaken the corroboration of the evidence behind the program faculty's claims with regard to the quality principles.

Audit of the *Inquiry Brief Proposal*. The main purpose of the audit of an *Inquiry Brief Proposal* is to verify the accuracy of the plan the faculty is proposing for their eventual *Inquiry Brief*. This entails verifying the statements the program faculty members have cited with respect to their rationale and the evidence they have for *Quality Principles II and III*. As with the audit of the *Inquiry Brief*, the auditors select samples of evidence that they predict will reveal and represent the totality of the evidence the program faculty have that their plan for an *Inquiry Brief* will be successful.

4. Summative evaluation

Is the preponderance of the evidence in the Brief consistent with the program's claims that its the program's graduates are competent, caring, and qualified? Is the evidence reliable, valid, and of sufficient magnitude to support the program's claims?

TEAC's Accreditation Panel determines if the evidence, as verified by the audit, is consistent with the program's claims and the requirements of the TEAC system and also if the evidence is of sufficient magnitude to support the claims in the *Brief*. On the basis of its examination and evaluation, the panelists recommend an accreditation status and term for the program to the Accreditation Committee.

5. Accreditation decision

Should the Accreditation Panelists' recommendation be accepted? Was the TEAC process that ended in the panel's recommendation followed properly?

TEAC's Accreditation Committee makes two decisions: (1) whether TEAC followed its own guidelines and quality control system and (2) whether there is anything in the record that would call the panelists' recommendation into question. In their deliberations, the panelists and the committee are guided by a set of common heuristics for the accreditation decision but the panelists are satisfied if the preponderance of the evidence is consistent with the program's claims. The committee assumes the panelists were correct and can only undo the panelists' recommendation if there is conclusive evidence that the program's claims were not true.