

QUESTION #20: ARE THERE STANDARDS FOR LEARNING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AND SERVICES?

A conversation with Georgine Materniak

Yes, there are some standards documents which are of interest to learning assistance professionals. The CAS (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education) *Standards for Learning Assistance Programs*, initially published in 1986 and revised in 1997, was the first document to set forth standards of practice for the profession. Other standards in-

clude the NADE (National Association of Developmental Education) *Self-Evaluation Guides* and the AMATYC (American Mathematical Association of Two-Year Colleges) *Standards for Introductory College Mathematics before Calculus*. Both the NADE *Guides* and AMATYC *Standards* were published in 1995.

What is the difference between the CAS Standards, NADE Guides, and AMATYC Standards?

The CAS *Standards* are used to assess an entire learning assistance program. The NADE *Guides* adopted the CAS format and applied it to self-assessment documents for four specific components found within learning centers. The NADE *Guides*, therefore, are component-specific standards and are used to assess tutoring services, adjunct instruction programs such as Supplemental Instruction, developmental courses, and the teaching/learning process.

The AMATYC *Standards* are also component-specific and are used to establish standards of practice in college introductory mathematics courses.

So, you would use the CAS *Standards* to examine an entire program and the NADE *Guides* and AMATYC *Standards* to study particular components within the program.

What is the purpose of standards?

The primary purpose of standards is to promote quality programs and services for our students. Standards identify and articulate essential and necessary practices and elements found in good programs. The quality of a program can be determined by the degree to which

these practices and elements are found in the program. Since we strive for excellence in meeting the needs of our students, we can use the standards to assure that our programs contain the essential ingredients found in high quality programs.

Why should I consider using standards?

Standards can be used for several purposes. Standards are used as tools for conducting a self-study of a program or a program component. Program self-studies are most often conducted in preparation for institutional accreditation. Standards are also used as a guide or checklist for developing a new program or for significantly expanding or consolidating existing services. For example, a tutor service that is charged with becoming a full-scale learning center would find the CAS *Standards* to be a good source for outlining the considerations and decisions that will need to be addressed. In addition to program development, standards can be used for staff devel-

opment and provide a common focus for planning and goal setting exercises. Standards also function as an authoritative source for negotiating and bargaining with institutional administrators for additional resources or for justifying the continuation of certain program practices.

The NADE *Guides* suggest additional uses including serving as a discussion tool for program decisions, identifying a program component's strengths and weaknesses, formulating long-range planning, and making budget decisions.

What exactly is CAS?

CAS, which formed in 1979 as the Council for the Advancement of Standards for Student Services/Development Programs, was established as a consortium of student affairs professional organizations. In 1992, CAS broad-

ened its scope and changed its name to Council for Advancement in Standards in Higher Education. NADE and CRLA then became members and actively involved in the planning and review of the document.

Can you describe the CAS Standards?

The CAS *Standards* are actually a collection of 23 documents that address specific functional areas in higher education. The learning

assistance document is one of these 23 standards.

What is the format of the NADE Guides?

The NADE Standards and Evaluation Committee adopted the CAS Self-Assessment Guides format for creating the NADE *Self-Evaluation Guides* for Tutor Services, Adjunct Instructional Programs, Developmental Coursework Programs, and Program Factors Influencing the Teaching/Learning Process.

The Tutor Services Guide, for example, is made up of the same 13 sections found in the CAS Standards beginning with a "Mission" section and ending with the "Evaluation" section. However, the standards for each of these sections is written as an individual statement as found in the CAS Self-Assessment Guides format. Each section culminates in a summary which identifies areas of strengths and weaknesses and calls for specific action plans based on the assessment.

CAS Information:

How to get copies of the various standards documents:

To order the CAS *Standards* send \$25 (\$22 plus \$3 postage and handling) in the form of a check or money order to:

CAS c/o ACPA
One Dupont Circle, NW, Ste. 300
Washington, DC 20036-1110

After September of 1998, the CAS *Standards* will be released for posting on web sites of major learning assistance organizations. Most likely, you will find it posted on the NADE, CRLA and Winter Institute web sites.

To order the NADE *Self-Evaluation Guides*, send \$18.95 plus \$5.00 shipping to:

H&H Publishing Company
1231 Kapp Drive
Clearwater, FL 33765
(727) 442-2195 for FAX with PO
(800) 366-4079 for phone with PO

Crossroads in Mathematics: Standards for Introductory College Mathematics Before Calculus can be ordered through:

AMATYC
State Technical Institute at Memphis
5983 Macon Cove
Memphis, TN 38134

Originally, *Crossroads in Mathematics* was made available free but the order form indicates that when the supply is exhausted, copies would be available at a moderate cost.

ADDITIONAL READINGS

- Clark-Thayer, S. (Ed.). 1995. *NADE self-evaluation guides: Models for assessing learning assistance/developmental education programs*. Clearwater, FL: H&H Publishing Company.
- Cohen, D. (Ed.). 1995. *Crossroads in mathematics: Standards for introductory college mathematics before calculus*. Memphis, TN: American Mathematical Association for Two-Year Colleges.
- Materniak G., & Williams, A. (1987). CAS standards and guidelines for learning assistance programs. *Journal of Developmental Education*, (11), 12-18.
- Miller, T. K. (Ed.). 1997. *The book of professional standards for higher education*. Washington, DC: Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education.

Georgine Materniak is the Director of the University of Pittsburgh Learning Skills Center. She has been active in professional organizations over the past 20 years first as Chairperson of ACPAUs Commission on Learning Centers in Higher Education and most recently as Co-Chair of the NADE Standards and Evaluation Committee. In these capacities, Georgine has been involved with program standards and certification projects. She was the primary drafter of the 1986 edition of the CAS Standards and Guidelines for Learning Assistance Centers and had significant responsibility for the 1997 revised edition. Georgine is a member of the team responsible for the NADE Program Certification project. She also serves on the editorial board of Learning Assistance Review.