

# Academic Audit Onsite Evaluation

## Instructions for Audit Chairs and Teams

In accordance with instructional evaluation guidelines promulgated by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission in 2000, each of the institution's mature programs will be evaluated according to specified criteria. In December 2003, the Academic Audit was approved to serve as an alternative to the traditional peer review process for programs scheduled for 2004-05. The Academic Audit has two parts: Evaluation teams of trained TBR faculty and administrators will (1) indicate the degree to which the evaluated program meets process standards stated on the accompanying Audit Evaluation Sheet and will (2) supply a narrative report (no more than ten pages) of their assessment of the effectiveness of the unit's processes in ensuring a quality program.

**Institution:** Nashville State Technical Community College

**Program:** Office Administration

**CIP Code:** 32.52.0401.00

**Degree Level:**  Certificate  Associate  Baccalaureate  Master's  Doctoral

### **Instructions for Audit Chairs and Teams**

#### **Part I: Academic Audit Check Sheet**

Using the Audit process standards for evaluating the degree program(s) listed above, complete the 13 elements for which a scale of 1-5 is stated on the Audit Evaluation check sheet. For the 4 summary judgments (conclusions) provide a very brief narrative of your evaluation.

#### **Part II: Narrative Evaluation**

The Audit Chair and Team will use their conclusions indicated on the Audit check sheet to write a narrative report of their conclusions. The template for completing this report (limited to 10 pages) is attached.

The Audit Evaluation will become part of the record of the academic program review and will be shared with the academic department/unit, the college, and the central administration, as well as the Tennessee Higher Education Commission.

**Audit Chair's name, title, and institution:** Janice Van Dyke, Professor, Developmental Studies, Southwest Tennessee Community College

**Audit Chair's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** May 24, 2005

#### **Names, titles, and institutions of Audit Team members:**

Betty Dandridge Johnson, Director of Policy, Planning and Research, Tennessee Higher Education Commission

**Academic Audit Team Report  
Office Administration Program  
Nashville State Technical Community College  
March 23, 2005 Visit**

**I. Introduction**

A. Description of Program being Audited

The Office Administration program at Nashville State Technical Community College is an Associate of Applied Science degree program with concentrations in two areas, Administrative and Medical. In addition, there are career advancement certificates in Medical Coding, Medical Transcription, Medical Receptionist, Electronic Office Technology, and Office Applications. There are approximately 100 students enrolled in the program per term with approximately 25 graduates annually. The program is accredited by the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs.

B. Protocol of Academic Audit Review on March 23, 2005

A plenary session was held from 9:00 a.m. until 9:50 a.m. with program review committees from the Office Administration, Business Management and Computer Accounting programs, faculty from these three areas, program heads, the dean, the provost, advisory committee members, and students who work closely with faculty in campus organizations or on public service activities.

A plenary session with a cross section of students from the programs of Office Administration, Business Administration and Computer Accounting was held from 10:00 a.m. until 10:30 a.m.

A session with majors and non-majors in Office Administration was held from 10:45 a.m. until 11:15 a.m.

A session with full- and part-time faculty members, and advisory committee members in Office Administration was held between 11:15 a.m. and 12:10 p.m. to discuss the five focal points.

The auditors held an executive session/working lunch between 12:10 p.m. and 1:00 p.m.

A session with full- and part-time faculty members and advisory committee members in Office Administration was held between 1:00 p.m. and 2:35 p.m. to discuss the five focal areas and particular areas of concern identified in the self-study.

The audit team met in executive session between 3:00 p.m. and 4:15 p.m.

An exit session which consisted of an oral report from the auditors to the program review committees in Office Administration, Business Administration and Computer Accounting, program heads, the dean and the provost was held between 4:15 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

C. Audit Team Members: Janice Van Dyke and Betty Dandridge Johnson

## **II. Overall Performance**

Faculty members in the Office Administration program at Nashville State Technical Community College are committed to the goal of producing outstanding administrative and medical office professionals. They want the students to have technical skills and to work well as team members in the office environment. Faculty members keep their goal in the forefront as they plan every aspect of the program.

The strong ties between the faculty members in the program and the Advisory Committee help keep the program current and up-to-date. Keeping abreast of the latest software technology serves the same purpose.

Students in the Office Administration program are enthusiastic about the curriculum and the faculty.

## **III. Performance in the Focal Areas: How does the Office Administration's work in each focal area measure up against the quality and evidentiary principles?**

### **A. Learning Objectives**

Overall, there is faculty consensus of the knowledge, skills and values for the Office Administration program.

Learning objectives in both the Administrative and Medical concentrations are driven by workplace needs and by the desire of faculty members to make their graduates employable.

Faculty members in the program make strong use of their Advisory Committee to keep the curriculum current and to meet employers' demands and expectations. The information learned from the Advisory Committee members is translated into learning objectives.

Faculty members also make strong use of the most commonly used software packages in the field in their programs. Thus, the information in the software packages helps to shape the learning objectives.

Textbooks are chosen once the objectives for the program have been developed.

Faculty members in the Office Administration program have a good understanding of the nature and make-up of the community college student and attempt to structure their program to meet the needs of the enrolled students. Faculty are challenged in seeking ways to reinforce these learning objectives while simultaneously assisting students in basic reading and writing skills.

Regular and continuous faculty development opportunities will ensure that industry changes and software upgrades will be translated into new learning objectives.

In addition, regular and continuous faculty development opportunities will ensure that faculty members will become familiar with learning and assessment software that generates reports and customizes students' lessons and practice exams.

Faculty members recognize the need to add or strengthen objectives related to presentation, spreadsheet, accounting and general communication skills in the program.

Faculty members also recognize the need to include objectives pertaining to specific new insurance forms and processes somewhere in the Medical Concentration.

#### **Organized Effort (4)**

##### **B. Curriculum and Co-Curriculum**

The site visit confirmed that the strength of the program is the faculty members' commitment to offer a business-driven curriculum. Furthermore, faculty members work constantly to keep the curriculum updated and relevant.

Faculty members in the Office Administration program seek best practices in professional publications, on the Internet, and by reading skills requested in job advertisements, and they follow the suggestions of their Advisory Committee members to keep the curriculum current.

Students stated that courses in the program were sequential and, thus, reinforced learning objectives throughout the program.

Due to the size of the department and specialization of faculty members, most collaboration on the curriculum is done with the Administrative faculty. The Medical curriculum is provided primarily by one faculty member with the assistance of the division dean.

Faculty members want to improve the capstone course in the Administrative Concentration by including topics that cover the soft skills such as proofreading, grammar and punctuation. In addition, they want to develop a capstone course for the Medical Concentration, but are concerned about the course it would have to replace since all curricula must adhere to a maximum of 60 hours and the Medical Concentration has already reached that maximum.

Faculty members are also considering realigning courses to move Administrative Transcription closer to Business English and Communication.

Faculty members have expressed a need for a formal process for reviewing curriculum and learning objectives/outcomes with instructors in the co-curriculum courses.

#### **Organized Effort (4)**

##### **C. Teaching and Learning Methods**

Most of the skills courses use appropriate teaching methods that facilitate the learning process.

The self-study report indicated the use of various software packages that prepare the students to take the MOS (Microsoft Office Specialist) Test in the particular software courses they have completed. Employers look for indications that students have passed the MOS tests. Other courses use PowerPoint presentations with some group work.

Sessions with students validated the various methods. Although students were generally opposed to group activities, they understood the usefulness of this method for preparing them for the work environment.

Students indicated they encountered an average class size of 15 and that this was conducive to learning and provided an appropriate group of peers for interaction.

Faculty members indicated that teaching and learning methods are not often discussed at faculty meetings.

Faculty members stated a desire to begin teaching communication and critical thinking skills.

#### **Organized Effort (4)**

#### D. Student Learning Assessment

The self-study report indicated that the Office Administration program uses various methods of assessment to evaluate the program and its courses.

The on-site visit provided sufficient evidence to verify that various methods of assessment are used to evaluate the courses and the Office Administration program.

Limited information was provided to demonstrate how these results have been used for improvement.

#### **Emergent Effort (3)**

#### E. Quality Assurance

The self-study report clearly outlined methods and processes the faculty members in the Office Administration program feel ensure that program outcomes and student learning outcomes are implemented as intended.

Sessions with faculty, students and the Advisory Committee during the site visit provided supporting evidence of the program's desire to provide a quality educational program.

As a result of the Academic Audit, the faculty members in the Office Administration program have begun meeting regularly (weekly.) As the meetings continue and the five focal areas are discussed and acted upon, quality will be assured.

In addition, the division that houses the Office Administration program is launching a long-range curriculum writing initiative that will start with a goal statement for the program and proceed through learning objectives, curriculum review and revision, teaching and learning and assessment. Addressing this initiative cyclically will also ensure quality.

#### **Emergent Effort (3)**

### **IV. Overall judgment of the Office Administration's application of the principles:**

Defining quality in terms of outcomes: The common goal of the program—to produce graduates who are employable in their field—provides the basis for all decisions regarding what students will do and learn. Keeping the goal in mind drives the manner in which learning outcomes are written, curricula are planned

and sequenced, and students are taught and assessed. With rich sources of testing and survey data available, more analysis could be done.

### **Emergent Effort (3)**

Focusing on how things get done: The program is making good use of its Advisory committee members in helping to focus on how things get done with respect to learning outcomes and curriculum. Faculty members admit that efforts need to improve in the areas of teaching and learning, student assessment and quality assurance.

### **Emergent Effort (3)**

Working Collaboratively: Weekly meetings by all full-time faculty members that were initiated during the Academic Audit ensure collaborative efforts. It is assumed they will be continued.

### **Emergent Effort (3)**

Basing decisions on evidence: Decisions about students' progress in courses can be based on evidence, either their tests or their capstone course, when it exists. Decisions about curriculum can be based on feedback from Advisory Committee members and from information learned at conferences and other professional development sources. However, as the faculty members indicated in the Academic Audit, decisions about teaching and learning methods and assessment had not been made on evidence in the past. The intention, which is encouraged, is to change that in the future. Data sources are available in many cases and it is a matter of collecting the data and analyzing it.

### **Emergent Effort (3)**

Striving for coherence: All evidence supports the sequential nature of the courses in the Office Administration program. Topics learned in one course are reinforced in later courses. The layout of courses makes sense to students and is clear to them.

### **Organized Effort (4)**

Learning from best practice: Faculty members in the Office Administration program look to the workplace for best practices to keep their program current. Following the trends at other best practice higher education institutions might also be helpful.

### **Organized Effort (4)**

Making continuous improvement a priority: The “History” component of the Self-Study describes a program that has not been stagnant. Changes have followed the marketplace. For example, when the market was saturated with legal paraprofessionals, the Office Administration program discontinued its Legal Concentration. Changes have also followed technology advancements. The program has been quick to incorporate the latest equipment and software into its courses. Continuous improvement in business and industry is driven by data. When the faculty members in Office Administration begin to collect and analyze the data available to them, they will see opportunities for additional improvements.

### **Emergent Effort (3)**

- V. **Overall maturity assessment and rationale: How does the team characterize the Office Administration’s maturity of effort—no effort, firefighting, emergent effort, organized effort, or mature effort? What are the reasons for this assessment?**

The Office Administration program demonstrates a high level of commitment to improvement through its dedicated faculty who have instituted weekly faculty meetings and have sought the input of Advisory Committee members who are professionals in the administrative and medical fields. Students are positive about the program and the faculty members who teach in it. Faculty members expend a great deal of effort keeping up with trends in their field and knowing what is expected from employers. They have uncovered weaknesses in data collection and assessment through the Academic Audit and are discussing ways to improve their practices in those areas. All of these efforts are applauded by the visiting audit team and best wishes are sent to them as they seek to advance their program.

### **Emergent Effort (3)**

- VI. **Conclusions. Briefly indicate the team’s conclusions regarding the following as they might apply to the auditor’s conclusions.**

*Commendations*—processes, practices, and commitments that are particularly commendable and merit recognition:

The self-study report was open and honest.

Faculty members were open and candid during the audit visit.

Administrative support is enthusiastic and openly visible.

Students feel the curriculum is relevant, sequential and rigorous.

Faculty members are very aware of the needs of employers and ensure that these needs are incorporated in the Office Administration curriculum.

Faculty members in Office Administration work closely with an active Advisory Committee.

Overall, student/faculty interaction is very positive. One student said, "I'm not a number. Faculty know my name and the college has given me confidence."

The Academic Audit process provided an opportunity for the department to work together as a team. They now value the benefits of this process and know what it can do to enhance their program.

***Affirmations***—processes, practices, or plans that warrant the audit team's affirmation and encouragement:

Develop a capstone course for the Medical Concentration to facilitate developing common questions for the exit examination from both the Medical and Administrative Concentrations.

Complete the curriculum handbook to assist with curriculum design.

Incorporate co-curricular activities into the curriculum to enhance communication and presentation skills and assist with job placement and networking opportunities.

Continue affiliation with the Association of Collegiate Business Schools and Programs.

Periodically conduct additional SWOT analyses.

Continue to expand students' options for flexible scheduling.

Work on systems that create and promote environments for student success. Systems mentioned in the Self-Study include assessment, academic placement, intervention, and advising.

Implement formal processes for cataloguing and analyzing information received from Advisory Committee members, former students, employer surveys and exit exam results.

Determine a method for gathering specific information about the success levels of graduates in their careers and begin a longitudinal data base with this information.

Learn to harness the power of the new learning and assessment software.

Develop learning objectives that pertain to the new insurance forms and processes in the Medical Concentration.

Determine how to emphasize critical thinking, presentation, spreadsheet, accounting and general communication skills program-wide.

***Recommendations***—some areas for improvement identified by the team on the basis of the Office Administration’s self study and site visit:

Add structure to the three-year initiatives. The program identified the outcomes for each of the five focal areas but specifics and priorities are needed to track implementation.

Consider implementing a formal advising process to inform students about departmental and college-wide requirements for graduation.

Encourage formal collaboration of the program with the general education faculty.

Use college-wide assessments to supplement departmental assessment initiatives.