

ACTION: Assessment Framework Development Policy

March 6, 2025

Goals

The goals of this session are to: (1) describe edits to the Assessment Framework Development Policy intended to reflect a nimbler process for monitoring important developments in a content area and implementing minor updates to frameworks when necessary; (2) explain revisions made based on the November 2024 plenary discussion and follow up conversations with members; and (3) take action on the revised policy.

Overview

Developing and updating the assessment frameworks that determine what should be tested in each NAEP subject area is one of the Board's most important legislatively-mandated responsibilities, overseen by the Assessment Development Committee (ADC). The Board undertakes this work through a comprehensive, inclusive, deliberative process that includes many subject-matter experts and stakeholder groups and involves a lot of time, effort and cost. Over the past several years, the Board and ADC in particular have engaged in many discussions to continually improve the process by which NAEP frameworks are developed and updated over time.

In March 2022, the Board adopted an updated policy on [Assessment Framework Development](#) for NAEP to incorporate several improvements to the process. One important aspect of the framework update process that has been discussed by the Board but has not yet been incorporated is the idea of a nimbler process that could be used to monitor a field on an ongoing basis and implement smaller changes to frameworks when necessary.

The Board has typically waited ten years or more to consider whether changes to a NAEP assessment framework are needed. When so much time has lapsed since a framework was last updated, it is more likely that major changes will be needed. The March 2022 framework policy does include a brief reference to the possibility of making minor changes to frameworks but does not describe a process for doing so, and it has been very rare for the Board to make only minor changes to NAEP frameworks.

The Assessment Development Committee has had several discussions in recent years to determine how the policy could incorporate a nimbler process for updating NAEP frameworks. The proposed revisions to the current policy are included as attachments both in a clean document (with a few comments describing key changes) and a tracked changes document from the version that appeared in the November 2024 Board meeting materials (with a few comments describing important revisions based on the plenary discussion). A tracked changes document from the March 2022 version is available upon request. **If you have any concerns about the proposed policy document, please contact Sharyn Rosenberg in advance of the Board meeting.**

Background

In order to implement a nimbler process for updating assessment frameworks, two key changes to the current policy are needed: (1) a process for monitoring the fields in which NAEP assesses to follow current developments that could have implications for NAEP frameworks either in the short-term or long-term; and (2) a process for implementing minor updates to NAEP frameworks when the Board determines this is warranted.

To address the first requirement, the updated policy proposes the establishment of content advisory groups (CAGs) in each NAEP subject area, consisting of approximately 10 content and policy experts. The CAGs would be standing groups under the direction of the Governing Board and would include at least some members having previous experience with NAEP and (to the extent feasible) the Board's work in the subject area (e.g., previous framework panelists and/or ADC members). Each CAG would meet at least once every two years to discuss current developments in the field. The CAG discussion may sometimes surface issues for the Board to monitor either informally (e.g., staff attending conferences or events or setting up discussions with various stakeholders to learn more) or formally (e.g., commissioning a research study to gather more information that could inform future decisions about whether and how to update a framework). When the Board does decide to update a NAEP framework, the revised policy also addresses the specific involvement of the CAG in different types of framework updates.

To address the second requirement, the updated policy draws a clear distinction between the size of the update (minor or substantive) and includes a new principle describing how a minor update would be conducted (whereas the process for a substantive update would be very similar to the current process, with some small modifications). A minor update would be conducted by the content advisory group instead of convening a full Development Panel, and the abbreviated process would be expected to take no more than 6 months as compared to about 18 months currently.

It is anticipated that some substantive updates to frameworks will still be necessary in certain circumstances (such as when there is a large shift in a field that does not happen gradually), but the intention would be that most framework updates would be minor. It is important to note that the intended purpose of convening content advisory groups at least every two years is to engage in ongoing monitoring of a field to better understand emerging issues that may have implications for NAEP assessment frameworks, whether in the short-term or long-term. There is no expectation that each framework would be updated anywhere near as frequently as every 2 years and it is not practical to do so for either the Board or NCES. However, understanding emerging issues could help inform whether additional research or information should be gathered. It is anticipated that many of the Content Advisory Group meetings would result in no immediate action.

The following edits have been made to the policy based on the November 2024 plenary discussion:

- **The previous distinction between minor, moderate, and major changes has been replaced by a new distinction between minor and substantive changes**
 - The key changes to the March 2022 policy are intended to add a path for implementing minor framework changes using an expedited process. Both “moderate” and “major” framework changes would have used the same full process that is very similar to the current process for all framework updates. There is no need to differentiate between “moderate” and “major” changes for the purposes of determining which process to use; as is currently the case, the scope of framework changes reflected by substantive updates will be determined by the initial Board charge to the Framework Development Panel and repeated interactions between the Panel Leadership Team and the Board throughout the process.
 - Retaining an unnecessary distinction risks a lot of time and energy being spent on debating whether proposed changes are moderate versus major and could detract from the essential question of whether the full or expedited process is warranted.
- **More details have been added describing the necessary conditions for minor updates**
 - The policy now explicitly states that minor updates shall not be used for the purpose of circumventing the full process.
 - Information on the following necessary conditions for minor updates (described in the plenary session presentation) has been added to the policy statement: “The determination to proceed with a minor update is based on all the following assumptions: (1) there is not a substantive change to the construct; (2) the intended changes impact few or no assessment items; (3) the process will take no longer than 6 months; and (4) the changes are unlikely to be of significant interest to stakeholders.”
- **The description of the ongoing CAG meetings has been revised to clarify that the intended purpose is for Board staff and members to remain current on important issues in the NAEP content areas**
 - The Board retains the authority for using information from the CAG meetings to trigger recommendations for when framework updates are needed. Outside experts will not continuously be asked to make a formal yes/no judgment on whether framework updates are necessary.
- **The minimum requirement for CAG meetings has been changed from at least once per year to at least once every 2 years**
 - Some CAGs may still meet yearly but the change allows for the possibility that it may not be necessary or advisable in all cases. For example, after a

framework with a substantive update is adopted by the Board, there is likely little need for a CAG to meet within 2 years.

- **Editorial changes were made at the request of Board members**
 - For example, the policy was revised to indicate that frameworks should “consider” rather than “reflect” current curricula and instruction (in direct response to a comment during the plenary discussion).
 - Other minor edits were made in response to written feedback received on the previous draft of the policy. Some of these edits are unrelated to the recent changes but improve the clarity of the document.

As a reminder, all edits to the policy made since the November 2024 plenary discussion are reflected in the attached tracked changes document.

Additional history

Interested Board members can consult previous ADC materials on this topic for additional background if desired:

Sharyn Rosenberg prepared a thought paper in response to a NASEM recommendation on a related topic that was discussed by ADC during the [May 2022 Committee meeting](#).

Following that discussion, papers on this topic were commissioned from six consultants:

- Alicia Alonzo, former member of the NAEP Science Standing Committee, and the committee that recently updated the 2023 TIMSS Science Framework using a process similar to what was proposed for updating NAEP frameworks
- Jessica Baghian, former state leader in Louisiana
- Andrew Ho, former Governing Board member and Chair of the Committee on Standards, Design and Methodology (COSDAM)
- Carol Jago, former Governing Board member and ADC Chair
- Stanley Rabinowitz, psychometrician with extensive experience working on state assessments and the national exams in Australia
- Ada Woo, psychometrician with extensive experience working on certification exams

Independent of the papers commissioned by Board staff, Lorrie Shepard of the NAEP Validity Studies (NVS) Panel had been working on a [comprehensive white paper](#) on the same topic, published on the NVS website.

These papers were included in the [November 2022 ADC materials](#) and discussed by the Committee during that meeting. In January 2023, a virtual panel discussion took place with the seven paper authors; key takeaways from this meeting were discussed during the [March 2023 ADC meeting](#) and formal minutes were included in the May 2023 ADC materials. One of many outcomes from these discussions was the idea of reconceptualizing the original recommendation to use existing NAEP standing

committees (whose current scope is strictly to review NAEP items and are constituted under contract to the NCEC item development contractor) as content advisory groups, new standing groups which would have (or acquire) expertise about NAEP frameworks in addition to the given content area.

During the [May 2023 ADC meeting](#), Committee members discussed key changes that would need to be made to current policy and procedures in order to make it possible to implement smaller updates to NAEP assessment frameworks. The key takeaway from the May 2023 ADC discussion was to consider convening a Social Studies Content Advisory Group to serve as a proof of concept for content advisory groups, in a limited capacity, by focusing on the “pre-work” to the launch of the planned updates to the 2030 NAEP U.S. History and Civics Frameworks. The first phase of this work took place from June 2024 – January 2025.

During the [May 2024 ADC meeting](#), Committee members provided initial input on the broader question of what policy revisions are necessary to enable an ongoing process for framework monitoring and the implementation of minor updates to frameworks.

During the [August 2024 ADC meeting](#), Committee members reviewed and provided feedback on an initial draft of the revised policy and provided feedback to be incorporated into the version discussed by the full Board in November 2024.