

Assessment Council Agenda

9:00-10:00

April 6, 2018

Alumni Board Room

University Commons

<http://www.maps.vcu.edu/monroepark/univcommons/>

1. Preparing for SACSCOC 5th Year Report
2. Assessment Reporting for 2017-2018: Friday, October 5 (First Friday)
3. New Assessment Management System (AMS)
4. Assessment Council Meeting Schedule for 2018-19



1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

The Principles of Accreditation:

Foundations for Quality Enhancement

2018 Edition

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www.sacscoc.org

Adopted by the College Delegate Assembly:
December 2017

Philosophy of Accreditation

Self-regulation through accreditation embodies a philosophy that a free people can and ought to govern themselves through a representative, flexible, and responsive system. Decentralization of authority honors the rich diversity of educational institutions in our pluralistic society and serves to protect both institutional autonomy and the broader culture of academic freedom in our global society. The empowerment flowing from self-regulation promotes both innovation and accountability in achieving the goals of educating and training citizens in a representative democracy. Consistent with these overarching values, accreditation is best accomplished through a voluntary association of educational institutions. Both a process and a product, accreditation relies on integrity; thoughtful and principled professional judgment; rigorous application of requirements; and a context of trust. The process provides an assessment of an institution's effectiveness in the fulfillment of its self-defined mission; its compliance with the requirements of its accrediting association; and its continuing efforts to enhance the quality of student learning and its programs and services. Based upon rigorous analysis and reasoned judgment, the process stimulates evaluation and improvement, while providing a means of continuing accountability to the institutions' stakeholders and to the public.

The culmination of the accreditation process is a public statement of an institution's continuing capacity to provide effective programs and services based on agreed-upon requirements. The statement of an institution's accreditation status with SACSCOC also represents an affirmation of an institution's continuing commitment to the Commission's principles and philosophy of accreditation.

The membership expects its peers to dedicate themselves to enhancing the quality of their programs and services within the context of their respective resources and capacities and to create an environment in which teaching and learning, research, and public service occur, as appropriate to the institution's self-defined mission.

At the heart of SACSCOC's philosophy of accreditation, the concept of quality enhancement presumes each member institution is to be engaged in ongoing improvement of its programs and services and be able to demonstrate how well it fulfills its stated mission. Although evaluation of an institution's educational quality and effectiveness in achieving its mission is a difficult task requiring careful analysis and professional judgment, an institution is expected to document the quality and effectiveness of all its programs and services.

SACSCOC supports the right of an institution to pursue its own educational mission as inherent in fundamental values of institutional autonomy; the right of faculty members to teach, investigate, and publish freely; the right of students to access opportunities for learning and for the open expression and exchange of ideas. However, the exercise of these rights should not substantially interfere with the overriding obligation of an institution to offer its students a sound educational experience that optimizes student achievement outcomes.

Section 8: Student Achievement

Student learning and student success are at the core of the mission of all institutions of higher learning. Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support student-learning outcomes for its educational programs. To meet the goals of educational programs, an institution provides appropriate academic and student services to support student success.

1. The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success.

(Student achievement) [CR]

2. The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:

a. student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.
(Student outcomes: educational programs)

b. student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs.
(Student outcomes: general education)

c. academic and student services that support student success.
(Student outcomes: academic and student services)

Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation:

Foundations for Quality Enhancement

**Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges**

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SECTION 8. Student Achievement

8.2 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:

- a. student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs, (*Student outcomes: educational programs*)

Rationale and Notes

Student outcomes – both within the classroom and outside of the classroom – are the heart of the higher education experience. Effective institutions focus on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning and support appropriate student outcomes for its educational programs and related academic and student services that support student success. To meet the goals of educational programs, an institution is always asking itself whether it has met those goals, and how it can become even better.

Even though the concept of institutional effectiveness may not be explicitly referenced in all of the standards, the accreditation process assumes that all programs and services wherever offered within the context of the institution's mission and activity are reviewed as part of the institutional effectiveness process.

When reviewing this standard, peer evaluators will look for evidence of each of the three key elements of the standard, but do so as an integrated activity where the parts are linked. When reporting about the process, it might be useful to consider the process in this fashion:



While the standard emphasizes the three points on the left of the graphic, a thorough explanation of the process will also describe the processes on the right side of the graphic. The institution will not be able to show effective assessment of its outcomes if its means of assessment do not measure what it has set forth as its expected outcomes. Likewise, if the assessment findings are not somehow analyzed or evaluated, it will be hard to show the linkage between undertaking assessments and the continuous improvement of programs and services. Finally, this is a process, and the underlying expectation is that it is ongoing.

NOTES

If there are commonalities in the process by which institutions use student outcomes assessment for institutional improvement across the three elements of this standard, the institution may want to prepare a single preface that could be referenced or hyperlinked from each substandard which outlines the process (organizational structure, timetables, local resources, internal review, etc.). However, review committees will make a separate determination of compliance on each substandard. **Because components of the process may well differ for each part of the standard, additional content in this *Manual* will be presented separately for each substandard.**

Effective outcomes assessment can be achieved in a variety of ways and the mentality that “one size fits all” is inappropriate and diminishes the individual missions of institutions. This is especially true regarding the use of language to describe processes; for example, “assessment,” “evaluation,” “goals,” “outcomes,” and “objectives” may have precise meaning to a reviewer, but the institution may have a meaningful effectiveness system even if it is not as precise with its language as the reviewer would like. The institution should develop and/or use methods and instruments that are uniquely suited to its circumstances, and are supported by its faculty and its academic and student support professionals.

At the time of its review, the institution is responsible for demonstrating that the full cycle outlined above has taken place, and that the current process is being used to promote continuous improvement. For institutions that do not use annual reporting, sufficient cycles of reporting should be provided to establish that the process is applied to all educational programs.

At the time of its review, the institution is responsible for providing evidence of “seeking improvement.” The institution should be using the data to inform changes based on evaluation of its findings. Plans to make improvements do not qualify as seeking improvement, but efforts to improve a program that may not have been overly successful certainly do.

NOTE ON SAMPLING

There is an expectation that an institution is required to be able to demonstrate institutional effectiveness for all its educational programs and related academic and student services. The volume of material represented by all this activity can be quite large, especially at larger institutions. To this end, an institution may provide a sampling of the effectiveness of its programs at the time of its comprehensive review. Sampling, for the purpose of accreditation, includes the following three elements:

- (1) a representation that is mindful of the institution’s mission.
- (2) a valid cross-section of programs from every school or division (and across all levels), with every major division and level of program represented. Sampling should be inclusive of off-campus sites and distance or correspondence education offerings, as applicable; at a minimum, the institution should clarify that assessment activities are inclusive of these modes of delivery and explain that process.
- (3) a compelling case as to why the sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution’s educational programs and its academic and student support services. Sampling does not preclude the institution from having effectiveness data/analysis available on all programs and units. It is the prerogative of a SACSCOC committee to conduct a more in-depth review of an institution’s data/findings/analysis on the effectiveness of all its educational programs and its academic and student support services.