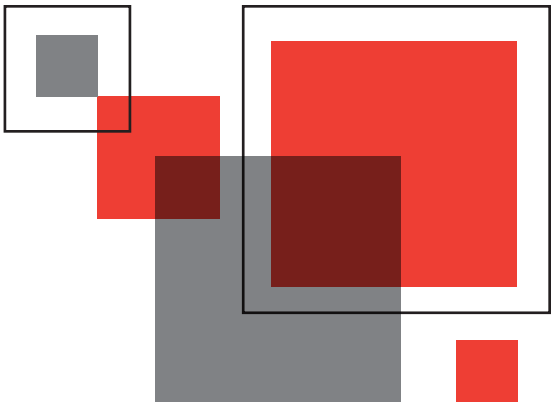
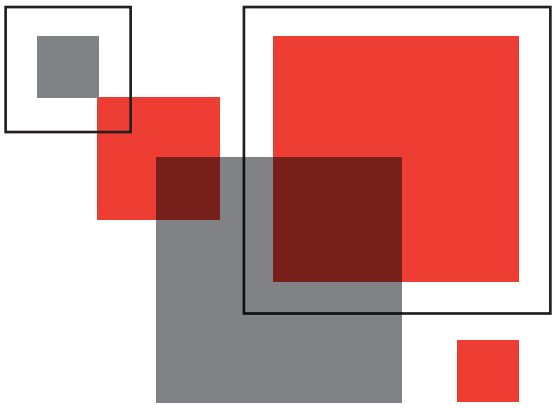


2013 Handbook of **Accreditation** *Revised*

WSCUC Senior College and University Commission



Date of adoption: July 2013

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PART I: THE *2013 HANDBOOK* AND WSCUC ACCREDITATION

Introduction to the *2013 Handbook* of Accreditation

WSCUC's *2013 Handbook of Accreditation* is intended to serve a variety of readers: representatives of institutions accredited by the Commission and those seeking accreditation; chairs and members of evaluation teams; those interested in establishing good practices in higher education; and the general public. The *2013 Handbook* has been designed to serve several purposes: to present the Commission's Core Commitments and Standards of Accreditation; to guide institutions through the institutional review process; and to assist evaluation teams at each stage of review. Each major section is designed to stand alone; at the same time, it fits within the larger framework of the *2013 Handbook* as a whole. A glossary is included to clarify terminology.

WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) is a California nonprofit public benefit corporation established for the purposes of accrediting senior colleges and universities in the region. All simple uses of "the Commission" in this *Handbook* and related documents are intended as references to WSCUC.

The Commission reserves the right to make changes to the *2013 Handbook* and all related policies and procedures at any time, in order to comply with new federal requirements or in response to new needs in the region. Institutions should refer to the website www.wascsenior.org for the most recent versions of all publications.

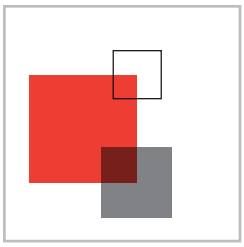
 It is the Commission's goal that through wide dissemination and application, the Standards and processes in this model of accreditation may inform and contribute to improved reviews and institutional practices.

The *2013 Handbook* is part of a more comprehensive system of support provided by the Commission. Supplementary information in the form of policies, guides, and associated documentation is available on the Commission's website and should be read in conjunction with this *Handbook*. The Commission welcomes suggestions for improvement of this *Handbook* and ways to make it, and the accreditation process itself, more useful to institutions, students, and members of the public.

WSCUC was originally formed on July 1, 1962 to evaluate and accredit schools, colleges, and universities in California, Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. Three separate accrediting commissions serve this region: one for K-12 schools (ACS WASC), one for community and junior colleges (ACCJC), and one for senior colleges and universities (WSCUC).

WSCUC has been recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation as a reliable authority concerning the quality of education provided by member institutions of higher education offering the associate degree, baccalaureate degree and post-baccalaureate degrees.

The Changing Context for Accreditation



A hallmark of U.S. higher education in the 21st century is the enormous diversity of its institutions, their missions, and the students they serve. Common across this diversity, however, is a widespread understanding that higher education represents both a public good and a private benefit. According to this understanding, higher education fosters individual development and serves the broader needs of the society and nation. Higher education has created the conditions for improving quality of life, solving problems, and enabling hope, which are essential to supporting economic prosperity and sustaining democracy in the United States. Accreditation is committed to the application of standards of performance, while affirming that high-quality education, irrespective of the different purposes of individual institutions, is in itself a contribution to the public good.

Accreditation has changed in form and substance as it has adapted to continuous social changes, increased global interdependence, and dramatic developments in information and communication technologies. The revisions to the Standards and institutional review process (IRP) described in this *2013 Handbook* have occurred within the context of these factors and reflect accreditation's responsibility to assure the public that institutions act with integrity, yield high-quality educational outcomes, and are committed to continuous improvement. Like earlier editions, the *2013 Handbook* is the culmination of years of exploration and commitment on the part of institutions and stakeholders from across the WSCUC region.

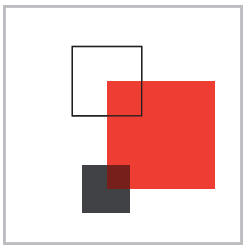
The *2001 Handbook* represented a significant break with the past, updating the formula for the review process and yielding a more engaged and creative endeavor. In doing so, it was a product of its times. The late 1990s was a period in which higher education embraced many important innovations—active and student-centered pedagogies, an explosion of educational technology, new roles for faculty, and new organizational forms. The approach to accreditation represented by the *2001 Handbook* and the *2008 Handbook* revisions reflected these conditions by creating a set of Standards and an institutional review process that put teaching and learning at the center through the core commitment to educational effectiveness. At the same time, institutions were encouraged to harness accreditation as a means to advance their own goals and priorities.

The *2013 Handbook* preserves and incorporates these values, even as additional factors in the operating environment for higher education demand attention. Students and their success continue to stand at the center of concerns about higher education accreditation. Thus accreditation seeks to establish standards and measurements of quality that ensure that students earn degrees in a timely manner, and that those degrees have demonstrable meaning and currency within the society at large. That meaning should also extend to graduates' ability to be engaged citizens and to obtain productive employment.

A new context for higher education has formed the backdrop for the *2013 Handbook*. Colleges and universities have been under increasing pressure to become more accountable for student academic achievement; to be more transparent in reporting the results of accreditation; and to demonstrate their contribution to the public good. Accounting for quality is a matter of public trust, given the billions of dollars government provides higher education through direct investment in institutions, federal and state financial aid for students, and tax exemptions for public and non-profit institutions. These factors lie behind the Commission's decision to rebalance the dual role of accreditation to support both public accountability and institutional improvement.

Another critical factor is the deteriorating fiscal environment within which colleges and universities must operate. Diminishing public funding for higher education and escalating operating costs have put pressure on public and private institutions alike. The *2013 Handbook* responds to financial concerns by establishing a more focused review process that shortens the time required for reaccreditation, while still providing adaptability in the review process.

With these revisions, the Commission calls upon institutions to take the next step on the assessment journey: moving from a focus on creating assessment infrastructure and processes to a focus on results and the findings about the quality of learning that assessment generates. Institutions are also asked to move from productive internal conversations about improving learning to engaging more deeply with other institutions and higher education organizations.



The Purposes of WSCUC Accreditation

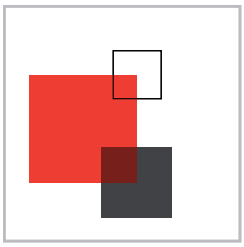
The overriding purpose of WSCUC accreditation is to assure stakeholders that a WSCUC-accredited institution has been rigorously evaluated and that it meets or exceeds the criteria required to maintain accreditation. In addition, the accreditation process is designed to build a culture of evidence, promote a commitment to institutional improvement, validate institutional integrity, and provide feedback that improves the accreditation process itself.

WSCUC is one of seven regional accrediting agencies. Regional accreditation serves to assure the educational community, parents, students, employers, policymakers, and the public that an accredited institution has met high standards of quality and effectiveness. Students attending accredited institutions may be eligible to apply for U.S. federal financial aid. Accreditation also helps ensure that credits and degrees are generally recognized for purposes of transfer, admission to other institutions, and employment.

In many countries, the maintenance of educational standards is a governmental function; in the U.S., in contrast, accreditation is peer-driven and accrediting associations are funded by the dues of member institutions. Visiting teams comprising experts and representatives from similar institutions evaluate an institution for initial or reaffirmation of accreditation. No institution in the United States is required to seek accreditation, but because of the recognized benefits of the process, most eligible institutions have sought to become accredited.

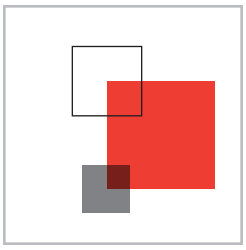
Accreditation is committed to the application of standards of performance, while affirming that high-quality education, irrespective of the different purposes of individual institutions, is in itself a contribution to the public good.

Commission Code of Good Practice and Ethical Conduct



In carrying out its functions, the WASC Senior College and University Commission has established a code of good practice and ethical conduct that guides its relations with the institutions it serves and with its internal organization and procedures. The Commission maintains a commitment to:

1. Apply with good faith effort its procedures and standards as fairly and consistently as possible.
2. Provide means by which institutions and others can comment on the effectiveness of the accreditation review process, standards, and policies, and to conduct ongoing and regular reviews to make necessary changes.
3. Provide institutions and the general public with access to non-confidential information regarding commission actions and opportunities to make informed comment in the development of commission policies. (see Policy on Public Access to the Commission)
4. Encourage continuing communication between the Commission and institutions through the accreditation liaison officer position at each institution.
5. Maintain and implement a conflict of interest policy for visiting teams, members of the Commission, and Commission staff to ensure fairness and avoid bias.
6. Value the wide diversity of institutions within its region and consider an institution's purpose and character when applying Commission standards.
7. Assist and stimulate improvement in its institutions' educational effectiveness.
8. Provide institutions a reasonable period of time to comply with Commission requests for information and documents.
9. Endeavor to protect the confidentiality of an institution's proprietary information.
10. With respect to the accreditation review process:
    a. Emphasize the value and importance of institutional self-evaluation and the development of appropriate evidence to support the accreditation review process.
    b. Conduct evaluations using qualified peers under conditions that promote impartial and objective judgment and avoid conflicts of interest.
    c. Provide institutions an opportunity to object, for cause, to the assignment of a person to the institution's evaluation team.
    d. Arrange for interviews with administration, faculty, students, and governing board members during the accreditation review process.
11. With respect to Commission decisions on an institution's accreditation, provide opportunity for the institution to:
    a. Respond in writing to draft team reports in order to correct errors of fact and propose redaction of proprietary information.
    b. Respond in writing to final team reports on issues of substance.
    c. Appear before the Commission when reports are considered.
    d. Receive written notice from Commission staff as soon as reasonably possible after Commission decisions are made.
    e. Appeal Commission actions according to published procedures.
12. Request a written response from an institution or refer a matter to the next evaluation team when the Commission finds that an institution may be in violation of Commission standards or policies. If the Commission requests the institution to respond and the Commission deems such response inadequate, Commission staff may request supplemental information or schedule a fact-finding visit to the institution. The institution will bear the expense of such a visit.
13. Permit withdrawal of a request for candidacy or initial accreditation at any time prior to final action by the Commission.
14. Withdraw accreditation or candidacy as provided in the Accreditation *Handbook*.



The Status of Accreditation

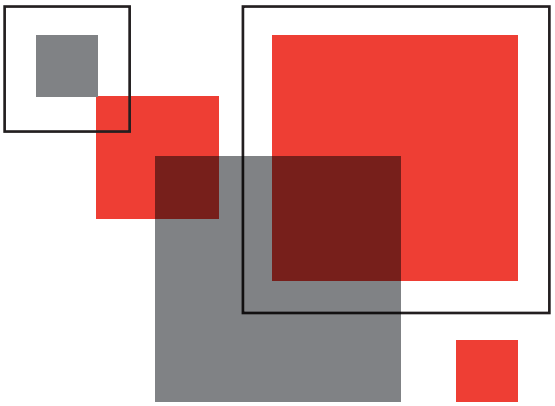
The status of accreditation indicates that an institution has fulfilled the requirements for accreditation established by this *Handbook*. This means that the institution has:

1. Demonstrated that it meets the Core Commitments;
2. Conducted a self-review under the Standards of Accreditation, developed and presented indicators of institutional performance, and identified areas for improvement;
3. Developed approved institutional reports for accreditation that have been evaluated by teams of peer evaluators under the relevant institutional review processes;
4. Demonstrated to the Commission that it meets or exceeds the expectations of the Standards of Accreditation;
5. Committed itself to institutional improvement, periodic self-evaluation, and continuing compliance with Commission Standards, policies, procedures, and decisions.

Accreditation is attained following the evaluation of the entire institution and continues until formally withdrawn. It is subject, however, to periodic review and to conditions, as determined by the Commission. Every accredited institution files an Annual Report, provides information for a Mid-Cycle Review, and undergoes a comprehensive self-review and evaluation at least every ten years. Initial accreditation, as a matter of Commission policy, requires institutional self-review and peer evaluation no more than six years after the date of the Commission action granting such status. Neither accreditation nor candidacy is retroactive. (Under certain circumstances, the Commission may set the effective date of accreditation up to six months prior to the Commission's action. See *How to Become Accredited* on the Commission website.)

As a voluntary, nongovernmental agency, the Commission does not have the responsibility to exercise the regulatory control of state and federal governments or to apply their mandates regarding collective bargaining, affirmative action, health and safety regulations, and the like. Furthermore, the Commission does not enforce the standards of specialized accrediting agencies, the American Association of University Professors, or other nongovernmental organizations, although institutions may wish to review the publications of such agencies as part of the self-review process. The Commission has its own Standards and expects institutions and teams to apply them with integrity, flexibility, and an attitude of humane concern for students and the public interest.

The Standards of Accreditation apply to all institutions in the region. For those seeking candidacy, the Standards must be met at least at a minimum level. For institutions' initial accreditation and reaffirmation of accreditation, the Standards must be met at a substantial level. The Standards define normative expectations and characteristics of excellence and provide a framework for institutional self-review. Depending upon the stage of development of the institution, some components of the Standards may be viewed as of greater or lesser priority.



PART II: THE CORE COMMITMENTS AND STANDARDS OF ACCREDITATION

Overview

The Core Commitments and Standards of Accreditation provide a foundation for institutional reviews and actions. The Core Commitments express the values underlying WSCUC accreditation, while the Standards build upon the Core Commitments, articulating broad principles of good practice. The Standards are explicated by the Criteria for Review (CFR), and the CFRs in turn are supported by Guidelines and Commission policies. Together, these elements provide a coherent basis for institutional review and at the same time assure quality and integrity.

Understanding the WSCUC Standards

The WSCUC process begins by calling upon institutions to ground their activities in three Core Commitments. By affirming these Core Commitments and taking ownership of the accreditation process, institutions create learning environments that continuously strive for educational excellence and operational effectiveness in order to serve both students and the public good.

Core Commitment to Student Learning and Success

Institutions have clear educational goals and student learning outcomes. Institutions collect, analyze, and interpret valid and reliable evidence of learning as a way of assessing student achievement and success. Institutions support the success of all students and seek to understand and improve student success.

Core Commitment to Quality and Improvement

Institutions are committed to high standards of quality in all of their educational activities. They utilize appropriate evidence to improve teaching, learning, and overall institutional effectiveness. Through strategic and integrated planning, institutions demonstrate the capacity to fulfill their current commitments and future needs and opportunities.

Core Commitment to Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability

Institutions recognize that the public has entrusted them with the critical responsibilities of upholding the values of higher education and contributing to the public good. They engage in sound business practices, demonstrate institutional integrity, operate in a transparent manner, and adapt to changing conditions.

Standards of Accreditation

The Standards of Accreditation consist of four broad, holistic statements that reflect widely accepted good practices in higher education. WSCUC institutions are diverse in terms of mission, character, and type. The Standards are broad enough to honor that diversity, respect institutional mission, and support institutional autonomy. At the same time, institutions must demonstrate that they are in substantial compliance with the four Standards and related Criteria for Review in order to become and remain accredited. The four Standards are:

- **Standard 1:** Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives
- **Standard 2:** Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions
- **Standard 3:** Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability
- **Standard 4:** Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

Criteria for Review

Thirty-nine Criteria for Review (CFR) are distributed across the four Standards. The CFRs under each Standard provide more specific statements about the meaning of the Standard. The CFRs are grouped under headings that identify major aspects of institutional functioning. The CFRs are cited by institutions in their institutional report, by peer reviewers in evaluating institutions, and by the Commission in making decisions about institutions. Many of the CFRs are cross-referenced to allow for ease in identifying related and connected CFRs.

Guidelines

Where Guidelines are provided, they assist institutions in interpreting the CFRs by offering examples of how institutions can address a particular Criterion for Review. An institution is welcome to employ different practices from those described in a particular Guideline; in that case, the institution is responsible for showing that it has addressed the intent of that Criterion in an equally effective way.

Related Commission Policies and Resources

Following some CFRs are references to policies of particular relevance to those CFRs and any related Guidelines. Institutions are encouraged to become familiar with, and to review periodically, all Commission policies, which are binding on member institutions.

Following some CFRs are references to manuals and resource guides. The procedures described in WSCUC manuals, like policies, are binding. Guides, offering principles and examples of good practice, address topics such as program review, transparency, graduate education, and the use of evidence. Guides are not binding; they are merely suggestive and intended to provide helpful information.

Current versions of WSCUC policies, manuals, and resource guides are available at the WSCUC website at www.wascsenior.org.

Colleges and universities have been under increasing pressure to become more accountable for student academic achievement; to be more transparent in reporting the results of accreditation; and to demonstrate their contribution to the public good.

Understanding the WSCUC Standards

Institutions accredited by WSCUC share a common set of commitments that focus on students, safeguard quality, and assure integrity, accountability, and transparency. Institutions demonstrate this commitment by adhering to the Standards of Accreditation. WSCUC institutions represent richness in diversity of mission, character, and type, and the WSCUC Standards are written in such a way as to honor that diversity by respecting institutional mission and preserving institutional autonomy. By affirming these Core Commitments, institutions create learning environments that continuously strive for educational excellence and operational effectiveness in order to serve the public good.

1. Core Commitments

The WSCUC process begins by calling upon institutions to ground their activities in three Core Commitments. By affirming these Core Commitments and taking ownership of the accreditation process, institutions create learning environments that continuously strive for educational excellence and operational effectiveness in order to serve both students and the public good.

- Core Commitment to Student Learning and Success
- Core Commitment to Quality and Improvement
- Core Commitment to Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Accountability

2. Standards of Accreditation

The Standards of Accreditation consist of four broad, holistic statements that reflect widely accepted good practices in higher education. WSCUC institutions are diverse in terms of mission, character, and type. The Standards are broad enough to honor that diversity, respect institutional mission, and support institutional autonomy. At the same time, institutions must demonstrate that they are in substantial compliance with the four Standards and related Criteria for Review in order to become and remain accredited. The four Standards are:

Standard 1	Standard 2	Standard 3	Standard 4
Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives	Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions	Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability	Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

Standard 1

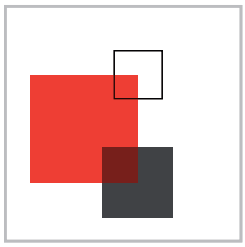
Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

- *Institutional Purposes*
- *Integrity and Transparency*

example

The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with those purposes. The institution has a clear and explicit sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, and its place in both the higher education community and society, and its contribution to the public good. It functions with integrity, transparency, and autonomy.

Students and their success continue to stand at the center of concerns about higher education accreditation. Thus accreditation seeks to establish standards and measurements of quality that ensure that students earn degrees in a timely manner, and that those degrees have demonstrable meaning and currency within the society at large.



3. Criteria for Review

Thirty-nine Criteria for Review (CFRs) are distributed across the four Standards. The CFRs under each Standard provide more specific statements about the meaning of the Standard. The CFRs are grouped under headings that identify major aspects of institutional functioning. The CFRs are cited by institutions in their institutional report, by peer reviewers in evaluating institutions, and by the Commission in making decisions about institutions. Many of the CFRs are cross-referenced to allow for ease in identifying related and connected CFRs. Embedded cross references can help institutions orient and check themselves with reference to other Criteria for Review.

4. Guidelines

Where Guidelines are provided, they assist institutions in interpreting the CFRs by offering examples of how institutions can address a particular Criterion for Review. An institution is welcome to employ different practices from those described in a particular Guideline; in that case, the institution is responsible for showing that it has addressed the intent of that Criterion in an equally effective way.

5. Related Commission Policies and Resources

Following some CFRs are references to policies of particular relevance to those CFRs and any related Guidelines. Institutions are encouraged to become familiar with, and to review periodically, all Commission policies, which are binding on member institutions.

Following some CFRs are references to manuals and resource guides. The procedures described in WSCUC manuals, like policies, are binding. Guides, offering principles and examples of good practice, address topics such as program review, transparency, graduate education, and the use of evidence. Guides are not binding; they are merely suggestive and intended to provide helpful information.

Current versions of WSCUC policies, manuals, and resource guides are available at the WSCUC website at www.wascsenior.org.

Institutional Purposes
Criteria for Review

1.1 *The institution's formally approved statements of purpose are appropriate for an institution of higher education and clearly define its essential values and character and ways in which it contributes to the public good.*

1.2 *Educational objectives are widely recognized throughout the institution, are consistent with stated purposes, and are demonstrably achieved. The institution regularly generates, evaluates, and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning.*

example

See also CFR 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 4.2 example

GUIDELINE: *The institution has a published mission statement that clearly describes its purposes. The institution's purposes fall within recognized academic areas and/or disciplines.* example

STANDARD 1

Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

- Institutional Purposes
- Integrity
- Transparency

The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with those purposes. The institution has a clear and explicit sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in both the higher education community and society, and its contribution to the public good. It functions with integrity, transparency, and autonomy.

Institutional Purposes

Criteria for Review

1.1 The institution's formally approved statements of purpose are appropriate for an institution of higher education and clearly define its essential values and character and ways in which it contributes to the public good.

GUIDELINE: The institution has a published mission statement that clearly describes its purposes. The institution's purposes fall within recognized academic areas and/or disciplines.

1.2 Educational objectives are widely recognized throughout the institution, are consistent with stated purposes, and are demonstrably achieved. The institution regularly generates, evaluates, and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning.

See also CFR 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 4.2

Integrity and Transparency

Criteria for Review

1.3 The institution publicly states its commitment to academic freedom for faculty, staff, and students, and acts accordingly. This commitment affirms that those in the academy are free to share their convictions and responsible conclusions with their colleagues and students in their teaching and writing.

GUIDELINE: The institution has published or has readily available policies on academic freedom. For those institutions that strive to instill specific beliefs and world views, policies clearly state how these views are implemented and ensure that these conditions are consistent with generally recognized principles of academic freedom. Due-process procedures are disseminated, demonstrating that faculty and students are protected in their quest for truth.

See also CFR 3.2, 3.10

1.4 Consistent with its purposes and character, the institution demonstrates an appropriate response to the increasing diversity in society through its policies, its educational and co-curricular programs, its hiring and admissions criteria, and its administrative and organizational practices.

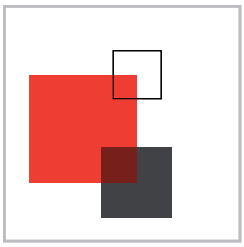
- Diversity Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution has demonstrated institutional commitment to the principles enunciated in the WSCUC Diversity Policy.

See also CFR 2.2a, 3.1

Integrity and Transparency

Criteria for Review



1.5 Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, or religious organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose and operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

- ☐ Independent Governing Board Policy
- ☐ Related Entities Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution does not experience interference in substantive decisions or educational functions by governmental, religious, corporate, or other external bodies that have a relationship to the institution.

See also CFR 3.6-3.10

1.6 The institution truthfully represents its academic goals, programs, services, and costs to students and to the larger public. The institution demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. The institution treats students fairly and equitably through established policies and procedures addressing student conduct, grievances, human subjects in research, disability, and financial matters, including refunds and financial aid

GUIDELINE: The institution has published or has readily available policies on student grievances and complaints, refunds, etc. The institution does not have a history of adverse findings against it with respect to violation of these policies. Records of student complaints are maintained for a six-year period. The institution clearly defines and distinguishes between the different types of credits it offers and between degree and non-degree credit, and accurately identifies the type and meaning of the credit awarded in its transcripts. The institution's policy on grading and student evaluation is clearly stated and provides opportunity for appeal as needed.

See also CFR 2.12

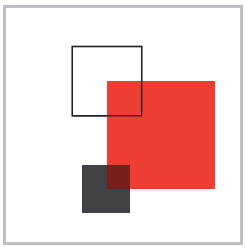
1.7 The institution exhibits integrity and transparency in its operations, as demonstrated by the adoption and implementation of appropriate policies and procedures, sound business practices, timely and fair responses to complaints and grievances, and regular evaluation of its performance in these areas. The institution's finances are regularly audited by qualified independent auditors.

- ☐ Complaints and Third Party Comment Policy

See also CFR 3.4, 3.6, 3.7

1.8 The institution is committed to honest and open communication with the Accrediting Commission; to undertaking the accreditation review process with seriousness and candor; to informing the Commission promptly of any matter that could materially affect the accreditation status of the institution; and to abiding by Commission policies and procedures, including all substantive change policies.

- ☐ Degree Level Approval Policy
- ☐ Public Disclosure of Accreditation Documents and Commission Actions Policy
- ☐ Honorary Degrees Policy
- ☐ Legal Fees Policy
- ☐ Maintenance of Accreditation Records Policy
- ☐ Matters Under Litigation Policy
- ☐ Substantive Change Policy; Substantive Change Manual
- ☐ Unannounced Visits Policy



STANDARD 2

Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

- Teaching and Learning
- Scholarship and Creative Activity
- Student Learning and Success

The institution achieves its purposes and attains its educational objectives at the institutional and program level through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success. The institution demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively by evaluating valid and reliable evidence of learning and by supporting the success of every student.

Teaching and Learning

Criteria for Review

2.1 The institution's educational programs are appropriate in content, standards of performance, rigor, and nomenclature for the degree level awarded, regardless of mode of delivery. They are staffed by sufficient numbers of faculty qualified for the type and level of curriculum offered.

- Distance Education Policy
- Substantive Change Policy; Substantive Change Manual

GUIDELINE: The content, length, and standards of the institution's academic programs conform to recognized disciplinary or professional standards and are subject to peer review.

See also CFR 3.1

2.2 All degrees—undergraduate and graduate—awarded by the institution are clearly defined in terms of entry-level requirements and levels of student achievement necessary for graduation that represent more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits. The institution has both a coherent philosophy, expressive of its mission, which guides the meaning of its degrees and processes that ensure the quality and integrity of its degrees.

- Credit Hour Policy
- Credit for Experiential Learning Policy
- Degree Definitions Policy
- Dual Degrees Policy
- Joint Degrees Policy
- Study Abroad Policy
- Transfer of Credit Policy

See also CFR 3.1-3.3, 4.3-4.4

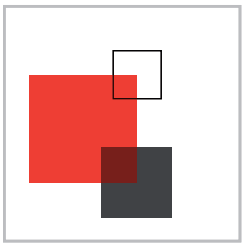
2.2a Undergraduate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and life-long learning. These programs ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking. In addition, undergraduate programs actively foster creativity, innovation, an appreciation for diversity, ethical and civic responsibility, civic engagement, and the ability to work with others. Baccalaureate programs also ensure breadth for all students in cultural and aesthetic, social and political, and scientific and technical knowledge expected of educated persons. Baccalaureate degrees include significant in-depth study in a given area of knowledge (typically described in terms of a program or major).

- Diversity Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution has a program of General Education that is integrated throughout the curriculum, including at the upper division level, together with significant in-depth study in a given area of knowledge (typically described in terms of a program or major).

Teaching and Learning

Criteria for Review



2.2b The institution's graduate programs establish clearly stated objectives differentiated from and more advanced than undergraduate programs in terms of admissions, curricula, standards of performance, and student learning outcomes. Graduate programs foster students' active engagement with the literature of the field and create a culture that promotes the importance of scholarship and/or professional practice. Ordinarily, a baccalaureate degree is required for admission to a graduate program.

GUIDELINE: Institutions offering graduate-level programs employ, at least, one full-time faculty member for each graduate degree program offered and have a preponderance of the faculty holding the relevant terminal degree in the discipline. Institutions demonstrate that there is a sufficient number of faculty members to exert collective responsibility for the development and evaluation of the curricula, academic policies, and teaching and mentoring of students.

See also CFR 3.1-3.3

2.3 The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are clearly stated at the course, program, and, as appropriate, institutional level. These outcomes and standards are reflected in academic programs, policies, and curricula, and are aligned with advisement, library, and information and technology resources, and the wider learning environment.

GUIDELINE: The institution is responsible for ensuring that out-of-class learning experiences, such as clinical work, service learning, and internships which receive credit, are adequately resourced, well developed, and subject to appropriate oversight.

See also CFR 3.5

2.4 The institution's student learning outcomes and standards of performance are developed by faculty and widely shared among faculty, students, staff, and (where appropriate) external stakeholders. The institution's faculty take collective responsibility for establishing appropriate standards of performance and demonstrating through assessment the achievement of these standards.

GUIDELINE: Student learning outcomes are reflected in course syllabi.

See also CFR 4.3, 4.4

2.5 The institution's academic programs actively involve students in learning, take into account students' prior knowledge of the subject matter, challenge students to meet high standards of performance, offer opportunities for them to practice, generalize, and apply what they have learned, and provide them with appropriate and ongoing feedback about their performance and how it can be improved.

See also CFR 4.4

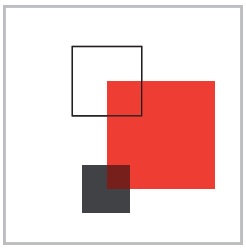
2.6 The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated learning outcomes and established standards of performance. The institution ensures that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards that faculty use to evaluate student work.

GUIDELINE: The institution has an assessment infrastructure adequate to assess student learning at program and institution levels.

See also CFR 4.3-4.4

2.7 All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes, but is not limited to, analyses of student achievement of the program's learning outcomes; retention and graduation rates; and, where appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement, and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations.

See also CFR 4.1, 4.6



Scholarship and Creative Activity

Criteria for Review

2.8 The institution clearly defines expectations for research, scholarship, and creative activity for its students and all categories of faculty. The institution actively values and promotes scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation, and their dissemination appropriate to the institution's purposes and character.

GUIDELINE: Where appropriate, the institution includes in its policies for faculty promotion and tenure the recognition of scholarship related to teaching, learning, assessment, and co-curricular learning.

See also CFR 3.2

2.9 The institution recognizes and promotes appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, assessment, student learning, and service.

See also CFR 3.2

Student Learning and Success

Criteria for Review

2.10 The institution demonstrates that students make timely progress toward the completion of their degrees and that an acceptable proportion of students complete their degrees in a timely fashion, given the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs it offers. The institution collects and analyzes student data, disaggregated by appropriate demographic categories and areas of study. It tracks achievement, satisfaction, and the extent to which the campus climate supports student success. The institution regularly identifies the characteristics of its students; assesses their preparation, needs, and experiences; and uses these data to improve student achievement.

GUIDELINE: The institution disaggregates data according to racial, ethnic, gender, age, economic status, disability, and other categories, as appropriate. The institution benchmarks its retention and graduation rates against its own aspirations as well as the rates of peer institutions.

See also CFR 4.1-4.5

2.11 Consistent with its purposes, the institution offers co-curricular programs that are aligned with its academic goals, integrated with academic programs, and designed to support all students' personal and professional development. The institution assesses the effectiveness of its co-curricular programs and uses the results for improvement.

See also CFR 4.3-4.5

2.12 The institution ensures that all students understand the requirements of their academic programs and receive timely, useful, and complete information and advising about relevant academic requirements.

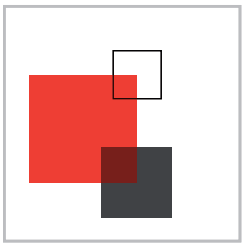
- Institutional Disclosure of Information for Students Policy

GUIDELINE: Recruiting materials and advertising truthfully portray the institution. Students have ready access to accurate, current, and complete information about admissions, degree requirements, course offerings, and educational costs.

See also CFR 1.6

Student Learning and Success

Criteria for Review



2.13 The institution provides academic and other student support services such as tutoring, services for students with disabilities, financial aid counseling, career counseling and placement, residential life, athletics, and other services and programs as appropriate, which meet the needs of the specific types of students that the institution serves and the programs it offers.

- ☐ Collegiate Athletics Policy
- ☐ International Students Policy

See also CFR 3.1

2.14 Institutions that serve transfer students provide clear, accurate, and timely information, ensure equitable treatment under academic policies, provide such students access to student services, and ensure that they are not unduly disadvantaged by the transfer process.

- ☐ Transfer of Credit Policy
- ☐ Credit for Experiential Learning Policy

GUIDELINES: Formal policies or articulation agreements are developed with feeder institutions that minimize the loss of credits through transfer credits.

See also CFR 1.6

STANDARD 3

Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

- Faculty and Staff
- Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources
- Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

The institution sustains its operations and supports the achievement of its educational objectives through investments in human, physical, fiscal, technological, and information resources and through an appropriate and effective set of organizational and decision-making structures. These key resources and organizational structures promote the achievement of institutional purposes and educational objectives and create a high-quality environment for learning.

Faculty and Staff

Criteria for Review

3.1 The institution employs faculty and staff with substantial and continuing commitment to the institution. The faculty and staff are sufficient in number, professional qualification, and diversity and to achieve the institution's educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic and co-curricular programs wherever and however delivered.

- Collective Bargaining Policy
- Diversity Policy

GUIDELINES: The institution has a faculty staffing plan that ensures that all faculty roles and responsibilities are fulfilled and includes a sufficient number of full-time faculty members with appropriate backgrounds by discipline and degree level.

See also CFR 2.1, 2.2b

3.2 Faculty and staff recruitment, hiring, orientation, workload, incentives, and evaluation practices are aligned with institutional purposes and educational objectives. Evaluation is consistent with best practices in performance appraisal, including multisource feedback and appropriate peer review. Faculty evaluation processes are systematic and are used to improve teaching and learning.

See also CFR 1.7, 4.3-4.4

3.3 The institution maintains appropriate and sufficiently supported faculty and staff development activities designed to improve teaching, learning, and assessment of learning outcomes.

GUIDELINES: The institution engages full-time, non-tenure-track, adjunct, and part-time faculty members in such processes as assessment, program review, and faculty development.

See also CFR 2.1, 2.2b, 4.4

Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources

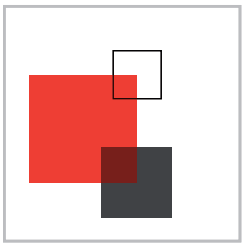
Criteria for Review

3.4 The institution is financially stable and has unqualified independent financial audits and resources sufficient to ensure long-term viability. Resource planning and development include realistic budgeting, enrollment management, and diversification of revenue sources. Resource planning is integrated with all other institutional planning. Resources are aligned with educational purposes and objectives.

GUIDELINES: The institution has functioned without an operational deficit for at least three years. If the institution has an accumulated deficit, it should provide a detailed explanation and a realistic plan for eliminating it.

See also CFR 1.1, 1.2, 2.10, 4.6, 4.7

3.5 The institution provides access to information and technology resources sufficient in scope, quality, currency, and kind at physical sites and online, as appropriate, to support its academic offerings and the research and scholarship of its faculty, staff, and students. These information resources, services, and facilities are consistent with the institution's educational objectives and are aligned with student learning outcomes.



- Distance Education and Technology-Mediated Instruction Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution provides training and support for faculty members who use technology in instruction. Institutions offering graduate programs have sufficient fiscal, physical, information, and technology resources and structures to sustain these programs and to create and maintain a graduate-level academic culture.

See also CFR 1.2, 2.1, 2.2

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

Criteria for Review

3.6 The institution's leadership, at all levels, is characterized by integrity, high performance, appropriate responsibility, and accountability.

3.7 The institution's organizational structures and decision-making processes are clear and consistent with its purposes, support effective decision making, and place priority on sustaining institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.

GUIDELINE: The institution establishes clear roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority.

3.8 The institution has a full-time chief executive officer and a chief financial officer whose primary or full-time responsibilities are to the institution. In addition, the institution has a sufficient number of other qualified administrators to provide effective educational leadership and management.

3.9 The institution has an independent governing board or similar authority that, consistent with its legal and fiduciary authority, exercises appropriate oversight over institutional integrity, policies, and ongoing operations, including hiring and evaluating the chief executive officer.

- Independent Governing Board Policy
- Related Entities Policy
- Institutions within a System Policy

GUIDELINE: The governing body comprises members with the diverse qualifications required to govern an institution of higher learning. It regularly engages in self-review and training to enhance its effectiveness.

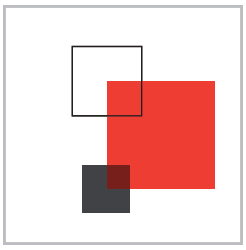
See also CFR 1.5-1.7

3.10 The institution's faculty exercises effective academic leadership and acts consistently to ensure that both academic quality and the institution's educational purposes and character are sustained.

- Collective Bargaining Policy
- Diversity Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution clearly defines the governance roles, rights, and responsibilities of all categories of full- and part-time faculty.

See also CFR 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 4.3, 4.4



STANDARD 4

Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

- Quality Assurance Processes
- Institutional Learning and Improvement

The institution engages in sustained, evidence-based, and participatory self-reflection about how effectively it is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its educational objectives. The institution considers the changing environment of higher education in envisioning its future. These activities inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness. The results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities, to plan, and to improve quality and effectiveness.

Quality Assurance Processes

Criteria for Review

4.1 The institution employs a deliberate set of quality-assurance processes in both academic and non-academic areas, including new curriculum and program approval processes, periodic program review, assessment of student learning, and other forms of ongoing evaluation. These processes include: collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; tracking learning results over time; using comparative data from external sources; and improving structures, services, processes, curricula, pedagogy, and learning results.

- Distance Education and Technology-Mediated Instruction Policy
- Program Review Resource Guide
- Substantive Change Policy; Substantive Change Manual

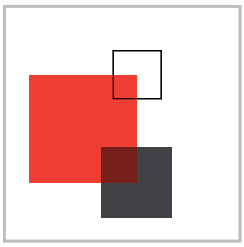
See also CFR 2.7, 2.10

4.2 The institution has institutional research capacity consistent with its purposes and characteristics. Data are disseminated internally and externally in a timely manner, and analyzed, interpreted, and incorporated in institutional review, planning, and decision-making. Periodic reviews are conducted to ensure the effectiveness of the institutional research function and the suitability and usefulness of the data generated.

See also CFR 1.2, 2.10

Institutional Learning and Improvement

Criteria for Review



4.3 Leadership at all levels, including faculty, staff, and administration, is committed to improvement based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation. Assessment of teaching, learning, and the campus environment—in support of academic and co-curricular objectives—is undertaken, used for improvement, and incorporated into institutional planning processes.

GUIDELINE: The institution has clear, well-established policies and practices—for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting information—that create a culture of evidence and improvement.

See also CFR 2.2-2.6

4.4 The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, and the conditions and practices that ensure that the standards of performance established by the institution are being achieved. The faculty and other educators take responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes and uses the results for improvement of student learning and success. The findings from such inquiries are applied to the design and improvement of curricula, pedagogy, and assessment methodology.

GUIDELINE: Periodic analysis of grades and evaluation procedures are conducted to assess the rigor and effectiveness of grading policies and practices.

See also CFR 2.2-2.6

4.5 Appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, practitioners, students, and others designated by the institution, are regularly involved in the assessment and alignment of educational programs.

See also CFR 2.6, 2.7

4.6 The institution periodically engages its multiple constituencies, including the governing board, faculty, staff, and others, in institutional reflection and planning processes that are based on the examination of data and evidence. These processes assess the institution's strategic position, articulate priorities, examine the alignment of its purposes, core functions, and resources, and define the future direction of the institution.

See also CFR 1.1, 3.4

4.7 Within the context of its mission and structural and financial realities, the institution considers changes that are currently taking place and are anticipated to take place within the institution and higher education environment as part of its planning, new program development, and resource allocation.

See also CFR 1.1, 2.1, 3.4

PART III: WSCUC QUALITY ASSURANCE

Multiple Approaches

The Commission has put in place multiple approaches to quality assurance. Standing committees focus on specific aspects of institutional functioning. These committees are staffed by individuals with appropriate expertise and experience. The institutional review process (IRP) for reaffirmation of accreditation, described in detail in the following section of this *Handbook*, is at the heart of WSCUC's quality-assurance processes. In addition, all WSCUC-accredited institutions submit detailed annual reports and information for a Mid-Cycle Review. Under some circumstances, special visits and/or interim reports may also be requested.

Standing Committees

WSCUC currently has four standing committees:

The Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) conducts reviews of the applications received from institutions seeking WSCUC accreditation to determine whether an institution has the potential to meet the Standards and other requirements.

The Financial Review Committee (FRC) defines financial data and ratios to help evaluate the financial viability of institutions.

The Interim Report Committee (IRC) reviews interim reports and supporting documents, following up on recommendations that have been made in a Commission action letter or previous interim report.

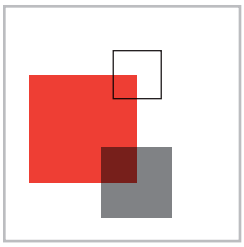
The Substantive Change Committee (SCC) reviews proposals for changes that may significantly affect an institution's quality, objectives, scope, or control. Federal regulations and Commission policies require prior approval of institutional substantive changes in degree programs, methods of delivery, and organizational changes.

The committees are comprised of representatives of institutions in the region who are appointed by the President and/or executive staff of WSCUC.

WSCUC Educational Programming

WSCUC offers educational programming including the annual Academic Resource Conference (ARC) to assist institutions in developing expertise in areas relevant to the Standards. Educational programming is entirely optional and offers a useful and supportive way to build human capital and maintain the momentum for institutional effectiveness. Information on educational programming may be found at www.wascsenior.org.

The Institutional Review Process



This section is designed to assist institutions as they address WSCUC's 2013 Standards of Accreditation for reaffirmation of accreditation. It provides a description of the steps involved in an institution's reaffirmation process, the components that need to be included in the institutional report, interactions with the evaluation team, and other details.

The Institutional Review Process (IRP) described below applies to institutions that are seeking reaffirmation of accreditation. Other models apply for institutions seeking Eligibility, Candidacy, or Initial Accreditation. At the Commission's discretion, institutions may be directed to follow a process that differs from the one described in the pages that follow, and those institutions will be guided by other documents describing those reviews.

All institutions need to demonstrate that they are in substantial compliance with the 2013 Standards of Accreditation and with those federal regulations that the Commission is required to oversee the implementation of. Within this context, the goal of the process is the improvement of student learning, student success, and institutional effectiveness.

Institutions can typically expect to spend two to three years pursuing reaffirmation of WSCUC accreditation. Briefly stated, the IRP involves an Offsite Review by the evaluation team; and an Accreditation Visit to the institution by the same evaluation team. These steps are followed by a Commission decision on an institution's reaffirmation of accreditation. A description of the review process follows.

Student success includes not only strong retention and degree completion rates, but also high-quality learning. It means that students are prepared for success in their personal, civic, and professional lives, and that they embody the values and behaviors that make their institution distinctive.

Overview of the Institutional Review Process

	STEP 1: Offsite Review (1 day)	STEP 2: Visit (3 days)
Objective	Determine scope of the visit and identify any issues related to compliance with the Standards	Evaluate areas identified in the Offsite Review and verify compliance with the Standards
How	Team conducts Offsite Review including video conference with institutional representatives	Team visits the institution
When	Institutional report submitted 10 weeks prior to Offsite Review	6 months after the Offsite Review
Reviewed by the team	Institutional report and exhibits	Preliminary team report Institution response to Offsite Review
Outcome	• Summary regarding scope and length of the visit is communicated to the institution • Draft preliminary team report	• Final team report • Confidential team recommendation to Commission**

**Commission action taken at next scheduled meeting

Self-Study and Preparation for the Institutional Review Process

Opportunities for Guidance: WSCUC is committed to supporting institutions as they prepare for the Institutional Review Process. There will be multiple opportunities for institutions to receive information and guidance in order to prepare for the Offsite Review and Visit.

Academic Resource Conference: Every year, WSCUC sponsors the Academic Resource Conference (ARC), which includes workshops and panels on the revised process that institutions will find helpful.

Institutional consultations: Institutions should arrange on-campus consultations, at their cost, with their WSCUC staff liaison. Objectives for this consultation include a review of the institution's responses to previous Commission recommendations and identification of the goals for the self-study, including strengths and areas of challenge. In addition, the WSCUC liaison is available to meet on-site with groups and individuals involved in the self-study process. Together, the team and staff liaison will clarify subsequent steps and strategies for the review. These may include, for example, how the institution will organize for the review, how various constituencies will be involved, and what resources will be required.

The Self-Study: The self-study is the institution's process of gathering data and reflecting on its current functioning and effectiveness under the Standards. At the beginning of the IRP, the self-study provides the necessary preparation for later steps, but self-study continues throughout the two to three years of review for reaffirmation. A candid self-study, with broad engagement of the institutional community, provides the foundation for a high quality institutional report.

In preparation for the self-study, institutions are expected to review their accreditation history. This includes the most recent team report and all Commission action letters received since the last reaccreditation; documents submitted to WSCUC since the last review for reaffirmation of accreditation; and WSCUC responses where applicable (e.g., recommendations related to substantive changes or an interim report).

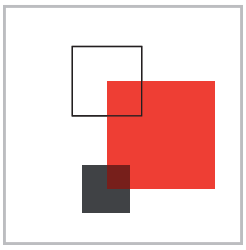
Early in the self-study, the institution undertakes the Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements. This worksheet offers a guide to the four Standards of Accreditation, the Criteria for Review under each Standard, and Guidelines. The questions it poses are designed to prompt conversation on institutional capacity and infrastructure, strengths, weaknesses, priorities, and plans for ensuring compliance with the Standards and institutional improvement.

This worksheet calls only for information that has not been submitted with the institution's annual report and that demonstrates compliance with several federal requirements accreditors are expected to monitor. The institution should complete this worksheet for verification by the team during the review process.

The institution also completes the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators, which provides a comprehensive overview of the institution's assessment processes and will be updated for the Mid-Cycle Review.

The completed Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements and the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators, with links to supporting documentation, are submitted as exhibits with the Institutional Report. Their more important function, however, is to provide concrete prompts that help the institution to think collectively about its current status, its vision for the future, and what it may need to do to build on areas of strength, ensure improvement in areas of weakness, demonstrate compliance with federal regulations and WSCUC requirements, and accomplish a successful reaffirmation of accreditation.

The self-study is the institution's process of gathering data and reflecting on its current functioning and effectiveness under the Standards.



Instead of beginning with the Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements and with the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators, some institutions may prefer to frame their self-study around their own priorities and planning (e.g., strategic, financial, and/or academic). The accreditation review may then be adapted to support those goals. Some institutions administer surveys or conduct focus groups to identify top campus priorities. Such approaches have the advantage of putting the emphasis on the institution's goals and then integrating them with WSCUC expectations; thus they may inspire broader campus engagement, stronger commitment to the process, and greater returns on the effort and resources invested. However the institution chooses to begin, explicit attention to the Standards and CFRs, as well as documented compliance with federal laws and regulations, is required.

After these initial steps, the focus of the self-study shifts to the specific components that form the institutional report. These components are described in detail below, along with prompts that can stimulate inquiry and reflection.

Another essential element at the outset of the self-study is practical planning for how the institution will launch and conduct the accreditation review. Such planning addresses the financial and human resources that will be needed, the structures that will support progress, the timeline and milestones that must be met, and metrics that are available or must be generated. To the extent possible, institutions are encouraged to make use of existing resources, e.g., standing committees, an assessment office, program review, and institutional research, before introducing new processes.

The self-study is the institution's process of gathering data and reflecting on its current functioning and effectiveness under the Standards. A candid self-study, with broad engagement of the institutional community, provides the foundation for a high quality institutional report.

The Institutional Report

Overview: The institutional report is based on the findings of the institution's self-study and, with the exception of an institution-specific theme, must include the components described below. However, the institution may structure its report in the way it finds best suited to tell its story, reordering and perhaps combining these components as needed. A suggested order for the components follows:

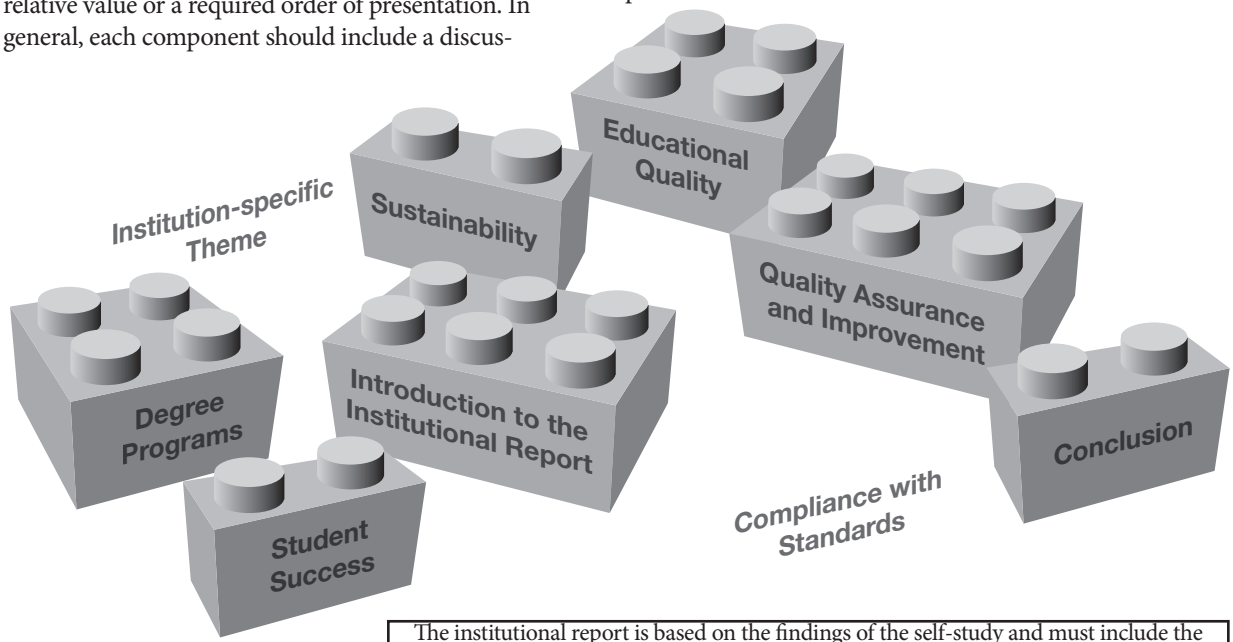
- Introduction: Institutional Context; Response to Previous Commission Actions
- Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators
- Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees
- Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation
- Student Success: Student Learning, Retention, and Graduation
- Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review; Assessment; Use of Data and Evidence
- Sustainability: Financial Viability; Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment
- Institution-specific Themes(s) (optional)
- Conclusion: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

The required and optional components of the institutional report are described below. Numbering is provided for ease of reference; it does not indicate relative value or a required order of presentation. In general, each component should include a discussion of the topic within the context of the institution; analyses undertaken; a self-assessment and reflection; areas of strength or significant progress and areas of challenge; and next steps, as appropriate. When plans are described, targets, metrics, and timelines should be included, as appropriate.

Length of the Report and Citation of Standards: The institutional report narrative is typically 12,000 to 18,000 words (approximately 50-75 pages, double-spaced ; see the Style Guide for Writing WSCUC Reports) in length. In the body of the report, it is helpful to hyperlink to relevant documents in the exhibits in order to support each assertion and to provide easy navigation for evaluators.

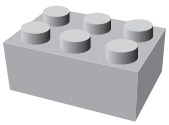
References to the Standards of Accreditation and citations of specific CFRs are included, as appropriate, in the body of the report. It is not necessary to cite all the CFRs because these will have been addressed in the Review under the WSCUC Standards. Instead, the institutional report can cite only those CFRs of direct relevance to the topic under discussion (i.e., meaning of degrees, student learning and achievement, student success, quality assurance, planning for the future, and possibly an additional theme). Institutions may cite others, as relevant to their narratives.

When the institutional report is submitted, it should include a letter, signed by the president/chancellor, affirming the accuracy of the information presented and the institution's intention to comply fully with WSCUC Standards and policies.



The institutional report is based on the findings of the self-study and must include the listed components. However, the institution may structure its report in the way it finds best suited to tell its story, reordering and perhaps combining these components as needed.

Components of the Institutional Report



1: Introduction to the Institutional Report: Institutional Context; Response to Previous Commission Actions

(CFR 1.1, 1.8)

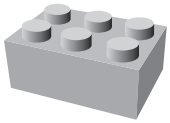
This component offers a succinct history of the institution and an overview of the institution's capacity, infrastructure, and operations. Activities such as distance education, hybrid courses, and off-campus instructional locations are integrated into this discussion. Special attention is given to significant changes since the last accreditation review, e.g., in mission, student demographics, structure, instructional modalities, finances, and other institution-level matters. This is also the place to provide a description of institutional values, the qualities of the educational experience that make graduates of this institution unique, how the institution is addressing diversity, and how it is contributing to the public good. If a theme(s) is included, it is introduced here with an explanation of how it was selected and where in the report the theme appears.

As part of this component, the institution also reviews the most recent team report and action letter and responds to Commission recommendations. As relevant, substantive change reviews, annual and interim reports, and trends or patterns of complaints against the institution, if any, may be discussed. This overview of its accreditation history, operations, strengths, and challenges can help the institution identify issues and anticipate questions that evaluation team members may pose as the institutional review proceeds.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- What does the institution perceive as its strengths and challenges based, for example, on internal planning and evaluation?
- How has the institution responded to earlier WSCUC recommendations?
- How does the institution demonstrate its contribution to the public good?
- What are the institution's current priorities and plans?
- How did the institution prepare for this review? Who was involved? What was the process? How did this work connect with existing priorities and projects?
- What theme(s), if any, will be discussed and where in the report do they appear?
- Has the institution provided any additional guidance that will help readers follow the organization of the report?

2: Compliance with Standards: Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators



Federal law requires every institution coming under review for reaffirmation of accreditation to demonstrate that it is in compliance with the Standards and CFRs of the accrediting association. In addition, the Commission requires that the institution have in place policies and procedures considered essential for sound academic practice.

WSCUC provides two documents— Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements; and Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators—to assist institutions in reflecting and reporting on their compliance with these expectations. In addition, these documents will assist institutions in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Institutions need to complete both forms and include them among the exhibits that accompany the institutional report when it is submitted. An analysis and discussion of the institution's self-assessment and any plans emerging from these two exercises are discussed in the narrative for this component of the institutional report.

The Review under the WSCUC Standards systematically walks the institution through each of WSCUC's Standards, CFRs, and Guidelines. It prompts the institution to consider where it stands in relation to capacity and educational effectiveness. The required federal checklists provide the opportunity to show how it is meeting federal requirements. As part of the self-study, the Self-Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements can stimulate useful conversations about the institution's strengths, weaknesses, and future efforts.

Similarly, the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators provides assurance that every degree program has in place a system for assessing, tracking, and improving the learning of its students. This worksheet can assist institutions in determining the extent to which they have

effective assessment systems in place, and what additional components or processes they need to develop for continuous improvement. The Inventory will also be used as part of the Mid-Cycle Review, as institutions are requested to update the information for that review.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

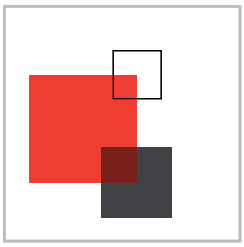
- Who participated in the Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements? What perspectives did different constituencies contribute?
- What was learned from completing this worksheet? What are the institution's strengths and challenges? What issues and areas of improvement emerged?
- Who participated in the completion of the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators? What perspectives did different constituencies contribute?
- What was learned from the Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators? What are the institution's strengths and challenges? What issues and areas of improvement emerged?
- What plans are in place to address areas needing improvement? What resources, fiscal or otherwise, may be required?

3: Degree Programs: Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees

(CFRs 1.2, 2.2-4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3)

Institutions are expected to define the meaning of the undergraduate and graduate degrees they confer and to ensure their quality and integrity. "Quality" and "integrity" have many definitions; in this context WSCUC understands them to mean a rich, coherent, and challenging educational experience, together with assurance that students consistently meet the standards of performance that the institution has set for that educational experience.

Traditionally, institutions have described their degrees either very generally (i.e., as something of self-evident value) or very concretely (in terms of specific degree requirements and preparation for specific professions). This component of the institutional report asks for something different: a holistic exploration of the middle ground between those two extremes, expressed in terms of the outcomes for students and the institutional mechanisms that support those outcomes. Defining the meaning of higher degrees can provide clarity for institutions, for students, and for a public that seeks to understand what unique educational experience will be had at that particular institution and what makes the investment in that experience worthwhile.



CFR 2.2 indicates that the degree as a whole should be more than the sum of its traditional parts: courses, credits, and grades. Exploring the meaning of a degree thus involves addressing questions about what the institution expects its students—undergraduates and graduates alike—to know and be able to do upon graduation, and how graduates embody the distinct values and traditions of the institution through their dispositions and future plans. It leads to analysis of how effectively courses, curricula, the co-curriculum, and other experiences are structured, sequenced, and delivered so that students achieve learning outcomes at the expected levels of performance in core competencies, in their majors or fields of specialization, in general education, and in areas distinctive to the institution. It means ensuring alignment among all these elements, and maintaining an assessment infrastructure that enables the institution to diagnose problems and make improvements when needed. Not least of all, it means developing the language to communicate clearly about the degree—what it demands and what it offers—to internal and external audiences.

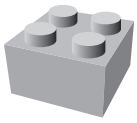
Institutions may wish to draw on existing resources that can be used to understand and articulate the meaning of degrees. These include, for example, AAC&U's LEAP outcomes, the VALUE rubrics (which align with the LEAP outcomes), high-impact practices (or HIPS), and findings from NSSE, UCUES, CIRP, or the CSEQ (see Glossary for information on these resources). As appropriate, institution-level learning outcomes (ILOs) may also play a useful role in defining the meaning of undergraduate and graduate degrees. Identifying common outcomes at the division or school level rather than the institution level may make sense for some institutions.

Another resource is the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). This framework describes the meaning of three postsecondary degrees: associate, baccalaureate, and master's and defines increasingly sophisticated levels of performance in five broad areas of learning appropriate to postsecondary education. The DQP offers institutions—and the public—a point of reference and a common framework for talking about the meaning of degrees, but without prescriptions or standardization.

WSCUC does not require institutions to use any specific framework or resource in the articulation of the meaning, quality, and intergrity of their degrees. Rather, institutions are encouraged to develop their own strategies for articulating the meaning of their degrees in ways that make sense for their mission, values, and student populations.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- What does it mean for a graduate to hold a degree from the institution, i.e., what are the distinctive experiences and learning outcomes? For each degree level offered, what level of proficiency is expected? What is the overall student experience? How do these outcomes flow from the mission? (CFRs 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2) [Note: The discussion may focus on institutional learning outcomes that apply to all degree levels, or on the meaning of the degree at each level offered, i.e., associate, baccalaureate, master's, doctoral.]
- What are the processes used at the institution to ensure the quality and rigor of the degrees offered? How are these degrees evaluated to assure that the degrees awarded meet institutional standards of quality and consistency? (CFRs 2.6, 2.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6)
- What was identified in the process of considering the meaning, quality, and integrity of the degrees that may require deeper reflection, changes, restructuring, etc.? What will be done as a result? What resources will be required?
- What role does program review play in assessing the quality, meaning, and integrity of the institution's degree programs? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1)



4: Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation

(CFRs 2.2, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.3)

Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to document that students acquire knowledge and develop higher-order intellectual skills appropriate to the level of the degree earned. This documentation is a matter of validating institutional quality and providing accountability as well as setting the conditions for improvement of learning.

CFR 2.2a states that undergraduate programs must: "ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking."

The institutional review process calls upon institutions to describe how the curriculum addresses each of the five core competencies, explain their learning outcomes in relation to those core competencies, and demonstrate, through evidence of student performance, the extent to which those outcomes are achieved. If they wish, institutions may create their own limited list of essential higher-order competencies beyond the five listed. They may also report student performance in majors or professional fields and in terms of institution-level learning outcomes that make the institution's graduates distinctive. The institution analyzes the evidence according to its own judgment, reports on student achievement of its learning outcomes in a way that makes sense for the institution (e.g., as a single score, or within ranges or qualitative categories), contextualizes the findings according to the mission and priorities of the institution, and formulates its own plans for improvement, if needed.

For example, for each core competency, the institution may set a specific level of performance expected at graduation and gather evidence of the achievement of that level of performance (which can be based on sampling) using the assessment methods of its choice.

The five core competencies listed in the *Handbook* are relevant in virtually any field of study, though different fields may define these outcomes in different ways and may also include other outcomes. At many institutions, it is the assessment of learning in the major or professional field that engages faculty and produces the most useful findings. Thus institutions may wish to embed assessment of core competencies in assessment of the major or professional field. Capstones, portfolios, research projects, signature assignments, internships, and comprehensive examinations provide rich evidence that can be analyzed for multiple outcomes, both specialized and common to all programs, at a point close to graduation as determined by the institution. Whatever the expectations and findings, they need to be contextualized and discussed in this component of the institutional report.

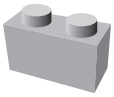
It is the institution's responsibility to set expectations for learning outcomes that are appropriate to the institution's mission, programs offered, student characteristics, and other criteria. The Commission is not seeking a minimum standard of performance that students would already meet upon entry or upon completion of lower-division general education courses. Nor does it seek outcomes common to all institutions irrespective of mission. Rather, the Commission seeks learning outcomes and standards of performance that are appropriately ambitious, that faculty and students can take pride in, and that can be explained and demonstrated to external audiences. If a given competency is not a priority for the institution or a particular field of study, expectations may legitimately be lower. Within the context of the institution's mission, the evaluation team then weighs the appropriateness of outcomes, standards, and evidence of attainment.

Standards of performance are best set through internal discussion among faculty and other campus educators. Although it is not required, institutions may benefit from external perspectives and collaboration with other institutions, e.g., through benchmarking or use of comparative data. For example, an institution may join a consortium that shares assessment findings and calibrates desired levels of performance.

Graduate programs and graduate-only institutions are expected to define and assess the generic intellectual competencies that are foundational in their field. CFR 2.2b, which refers to graduate programs, calls for expectations that are "clearly . . . differentiated from and more advanced than undergraduate programs in terms of . . . standards of performance and student learning outcomes." Graduate programs also set standards of performance, choose assessment methods, interpret the results, and act on findings in ways that make sense for the program and institution.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- What knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes should students possess when they graduate with a degree from the institution? What are the key learning outcomes for each level of degree?
  - For undergraduate programs, how do the institution's key learning outcomes align with the core competencies set forth in CFR 2.2a? (CFRs 2.3, 2.4.)
  - For graduate programs, how are graduate level outcomes developed? How do these outcomes align with CFR 2.2b? (CFRs 2.3, 2.4)
- What are the standards of performance for students? How are these standards set, communicated, and validated? (CFR 2.6)
- What methods are used to assess student learning and achievement of these standards? When is learning assessed in these areas (e.g., close to graduation or at some other milestone? (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 4.3)
- What evidence is there that key learning outcomes are being met? (CFR 2.6)
- What steps are taken when achievement gaps are identified? How are teaching and learning improved as a result of assessment findings? (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 4.3, 4.4)
- What role does program review play in assessing and improving the quality of learning? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1)
- How deeply embedded is learning-centeredness across the institution? What is the evidence? (CFRs 4.1-4.3)



5: Student Success: Student Learning, Retention, and Graduation

(CFRs 1.2, 2.7, 2.13)

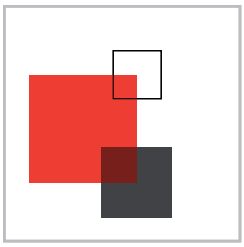
Student success includes not only strong retention and degree completion rates, but also high-quality learning. It means that students are prepared for success in their personal, civic, and professional lives, and that they embody the values and behaviors that make their institution distinctive. Institutions' definitions of success will differ, given their unique missions, traditions, programs, and the characteristics of the students served.

One metric for this component is WSCUC's Graduation Rate Dashboard (GRD), which uses six data points to estimate the institution's absolute graduation rate over time and accounts for all graduates regardless of how students matriculate (first-time or transfer, lower or upper division) or enroll (part-time, full-time, swirling), or what programs they pursue.

The GRD does not track specific cohorts of students. Institutions should also calculate direct measures of retention and graduation.

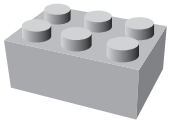
This component needs to address, explicitly, the learning and personal development dimensions of student success. Since aggregate data can mask disparities among student subpopulations, institutions are advised to disaggregate their data, going beyond demographic characteristics. For example, analysis using several variables (such as students' choice of major, participation in research, study abroad, leadership roles, admission to honor societies, pass rates on licensure examinations, and admission to graduate programs) may yield useful information.

While student success is the responsibility of the entire institution, student affairs and academic support can play a particularly critical role. Here, too, a well-developed assessment infrastructure can provide the data to document and improve student success.



Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- How is student success defined (accounting for both completion and learning), given the distinctive mission, values, and programs offered, and the characteristics of the students being served? (CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.10, 2.13)
- How is student success promoted, including both completion and learning? What has been learned about different student subpopulations as a result of disaggregating data? (CFRs 2.3, 2.10-2.14)
- What role does program review play in assessing and improving student success? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1)
- Which programs are particularly effective in retaining and graduating their majors? What can be learned from them? What is the students' experience like? (CFRs 2.6, 2.10, 2.13)
- How well do students meet the institution's definition of student success? In what ways does the institution need to improve so that more students are successful? What is the timeline for improvement? How will these goals be achieved? (CFRs 2.6, 4.1-4.4)



6: Quality Assurance and Improvement: Program Review; Assessment; Use of Data and Evidence

(CFRs 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.10, 4.1-4.7)

Successful quality improvement efforts are broadly participatory, iterative, and evidence-based. This component of the institutional report includes a discussion of three basic tools of quality improvement—program review, assessment of student learning, and data collection and analysis—and presents the ways these tools inform the institution's decision making. In addition, institutions are welcome to discuss other quality improvement approaches that have made a difference, if they wish.

Program review remains a priority for WSCUC. It is a natural nexus and point of integration for the collection of data and findings about the meaning of the degree, the quality of learning, core competencies, standards of student performance, retention, graduation, and overall student success. Because of the commitment of students to their degree programs and the loyalty of faculty to their disciplines, program review has great power to influence the quality of the educational experience. Program review can also provide insight into desirable future directions for the program and the institution.

In addition to implementing systematic program review, institutions are expected to periodically assess the effectiveness of their program review process. They can do so, for example, by reviewing the quality and consistency of follow-up after program reviews; determining the effectiveness with which the program review addresses achievement of program learning outcomes; and tracing how recommendations are integrated into institutional planning and budgeting.

Assessment, along with program review, is an essential tool that supports the goals and values of the accreditation process. "Assessing the assessment" should not crowd out the work of understanding student learning and using evidence to improve it. However, good practice suggests that it is wise to step back periodically, ask evaluative questions about each stage of the assessment cycle, and seek ways to make assessment more effective, efficient, and economical.

Data provide the foundation for effective program review, assessment of student learning, and other quality improvement strategies. However, to have an impact, data need to be turned into evidence and communicated in useful formats. The discussion of data collection, analysis, and use can include, for example, information about resources provided by the institutional research office (if one exists), software used to generate reports, access to data, processes for making meaning out of data (see the WSCUC Evidence Guide for more information), and mechanisms for communicating data and findings.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- How have the results of program review been used to inform decision making and improve instruction and student learning outcomes? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1, 4.3, 4.4)
- What was identified in the process of examining the institution's program review process that may require deeper reflection, changes, restructuring? What will be done as a result? What resources will be required? (CFRs 2.7, 4.1, 4.4, 4.6)
- What has the program or institution learned as it carried out assessments of students' learning? How have assessment protocols, faculty development, choices of instruments, or other aspects of assessment changed as a result? (CFR 4.1)
- How adequate is the institutional research function? How effectively does it support and inform institutional decision-making, planning, and improvement? How well does it support assessment of student learning? (CFRs 4.2-4.7)

7: Sustainability: Financial Viability; Preparing for the Changing Higher Education Environment

(CFRs 3.4, 3.7, 4.1, 4.3-4.7)

To survive and thrive, institutions must not only cope with the present, but also plan for the future. In this component, WSCUC asks each institution first to describe its current status as a viable, sustainable organization; and second, to evaluate how it is poised to address fundamental changes facing higher education in the decade to come. In other words, what is the institution's vision of a 21st century education, and what role will the institution play?

At its most basic, "sustainability" means the ability to support and maintain, to keep something intact and functioning properly. Institutional sustainability has at least two dimensions. Fiscal sustainability—that is, adequacy of financial resources and the appropriate alignment of those resources—is fundamental and has always been critical in any institutional review. Indeed, financial exigency has historically been regional accreditors' single most frequent cause for sanctions. In a highly volatile financial environment, assurance of financial sustainability becomes even more critical.

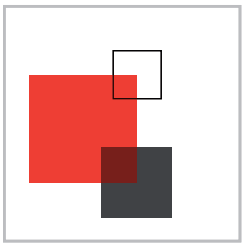
In this component, the institution presents its current financial position. If the Financial Review Committee has raised any issues or made recommendations, then the institution presents its response in this section of the report. Plans should include targets, metrics, and timelines.

A second facet of financial sustainability is alignment. It is essential that resources be allocated in alignment with the institution's priorities. For an educational institution, clearly, a top priority is student learning and success; thus resource allocation needs to support educational effectiveness, along with other activities that advance knowledge, develop human capital, and allow the institution to learn, adapt, and thrive.

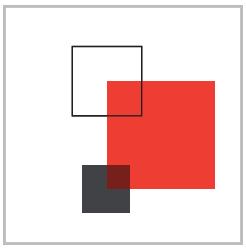
A third dimension of sustainability is the institution's ability to read the evolving higher education landscape and anticipate ways in which the institution itself may need to change. New technologies, economic pressures, public concern about the quality of learning, demographic shifts, student preparation for college, new skills and knowledge needed for success, and alternatives to traditional degrees—all these shifts and many others are rapidly transforming the social, economic, and political environment in which higher education functions.

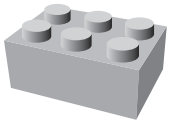
The task here is for institutions to develop a vision of their role in 21st century higher education. The choices institutions make in the face of these bracing conditions will influence their long-term success.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.



- Under Standard 3, institutions are expected to "develop and apply resources and organizational structures to ensure sustainability." How can the institution demonstrate that its operations will remain financially sustainable over the next 6 to 10 years? (CFRs 3.4 and 4.6)
- How well do financial allocations align with institutional priorities, particularly those related to the meaning, quality, and integrity of degrees offered; student learning and success; and processes for quality assurance, accountability, and improvement? (CFRs 3.4, 4.3)
- Under Standard 2, how does the institution identify and enhance the competencies that students will need to succeed in the future? (CFRs 1.2, 2.2)
- What role does program review play in developing a vision of 21st century education for individual programs and for the institution as a whole? (CFR 4.7)
- In what ways can the institution ensure that educational effectiveness will continue during the period from the present to the next reaffirmation of accreditation? What systems and processes are in place? How deeply embedded are these initiatives in institutional systems and culture? How is educational effectiveness prioritized in the institution's formal plans? (CFRs 3.1-3.10, 4.1, 4.2, 4.6)
- How does the institution demonstrate that it is a learning organization? What evidence can be put forward? (CFRs 4.3-4.7)
- What resources have been committed to assessment of learning and improvement of student performance? How are decisions about levels of support made? How is support maintained even in times of constrained resources? (CFRs 3.6, 3.7, 4.3, 4.4)
- Of the changes taking place globally, nationally, locally, and in higher education, which ones will affect the institution most strongly in the next seven to 10 years? What is the institution's vision of education for the coming decade? For the more distant future? How is the institution anticipating, planning for, and adapting to such changes? (CFRs 4.6, 4.7)
- What specific skills does the institution possess or need to develop in order to engage with developments impacting its future, including those occurring globally? (CFRs 3.1, 3.2, 4.6, 4.7)





8: Institution-specific Theme(s) (optional)

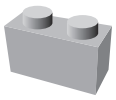
(CFRs as appropriate)

The accreditation review is an opportunity for institutions to align their own priorities with WSCUC's quality improvement process. In the *2001 Handbook*, the theme-based approach to self-study offered institutions the clearest opportunity for this kind of campus-wide engagement and improvement, and the vast majority of institutions took advantage of it. Thus the *2013 Handbook* continues to offer this option. In addition to addressing the components described above, institutions may identify and study one or two themes that are specific to the institution and of critical importance. The theme may emerge from institutional planning or other processes; in any case, it should connect to the Standards.

If the institutional report includes a theme, the component on institutional context is the place to introduce the theme and orient the reader to the part(s) of the institutional report where the theme will be developed. Origins of the theme, analysis, recommendations for action, and related steps can be included as a separate component of the institutional report, or the theme can be woven into one of the other components, as appropriate. Whatever the institution decides, it is helpful to inform the WSCUC staff liaison of the theme early on, so that an individual with relevant background can be included on the evaluation team.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- What one or two themes would advance institutional priorities and add value to the accreditation review?
- What are the institution's goals or outcomes in pursuing this theme? What is the timeline, what evidence and metrics will show progress, and what resources (financial, human, other) will be required?



9: Conclusion: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

In this concluding component, the institution assesses the impact of the self-study, reflects on what it has learned in the course of the self-study, and discusses what it plans to do next. This is also the place to highlight what the institution has learned about key areas of exemplary institutional performance.

Exhibits

Exhibits are attached to the institutional report and support the narrative. By being selective about what to include, an institution can avoid excessive documentation, which can be challenging for institutions to collect and for evaluation team members and the Commission to read.

The exhibits include the following items:

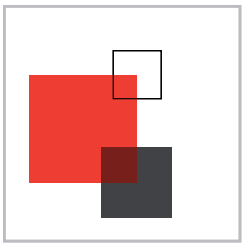
A. Completed Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements.

B. Completed Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators.

C. Institution-selected exhibits that support the institutional report's narrative.

Program review remains a priority for WSCUC. It is a natural nexus and point of integration for the collection of data and findings about the meaning of the degree, the quality of learning, core competencies, standards of student performance, retention, graduation, and overall student success.

Interactions with the Evaluation Team



Throughout the institutional review process, representatives of the institution interact with evaluation team members and WSCUC staff. Interaction with the Commission occurs at the end of the institutional review process when the Commission makes a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

The evaluation team, composed primarily of experienced educators from peer institutions as well as other experts identified to address specific needs of the institution, has the responsibility to evaluate the institution under the Standards of Accreditation. The evaluation team's work involves the following: reading the institutional report, exhibits, and other documents; conducting the Offsite Review; conducting the visit; and preparing a report of its findings and recommendations.

Every institution seeking candidacy, initial accreditation, or reaffirmation of accreditation has a WSCUC staff liaison. The liaison, together with other staff members, provides support and guidance to the institution, the evaluation team, and the Commission throughout the review process.

The Offsite Review

The focus of the Offsite Review is to make preliminary findings based upon the institutional report and supplementary documents. The institution submits its institutional report and exhibits 10 weeks prior to the Offsite Review. The evaluation team then convenes to evaluate the institution and its compliance with the Standards.

During the course of the one-day Offsite Review, the evaluation team engages in conversations with institutional representatives via video conference. Evaluation team members also share impressions, note issues for follow-up, formulate questions for the onsite review, and identify additional documents they may wish to examine before or during the visit. The evaluation team also either confirms the scheduling of the visit that the institution has requested (six months later) or it recommends a different interval.

Following the Offsite Review, the institution receives a summary of strengths, areas that need improvement, foci for the visit, questions for which the team seeks answers or clarification, additional materials that may be needed, and any special considerations. This summary, titled Lines of Inquiry, is prepared by the team with guidance from the WSCUC staff liaison. The Lines of Inquiry document is a private communication; it is not made public. WSCUC staff then work with the institution to make arrangements for the visit.

The Visit

The three-day visit takes place six months after the Offsite Review. An institution may request or the evaluation team may recommend a longer interval if the institution is expected to need more time to prepare a follow-up to the Lines of Inquiry. During the visit, the team meets with campus representatives to follow up on outstanding issues and verify or revise its preliminary findings concerning both compliance and improvement. The institution has an opportunity to demonstrate how it has responded to issues raised or questions asked at the time of the Offsite Review and to fill any gaps in the picture it wishes to present of itself. Following the visit, the team shares its draft team report with the institution for correction of errors of fact and challenges related to proprietary information. The team then finalizes the team report and forwards it to the Commission for action.

PART IV: COMMISSION DECISIONS ON INSTITUTIONS

The Commission serves as the decision-making and policy-setting body of WSCUC. The Commission is responsible for determining the action taken for eligibility, candidacy, initial accreditation and reaffirmation of accreditation of institutions being reviewed. Following the visit, the Commission reviews the accreditation history of an institution, institutional report and exhibits, the evaluation team's report, the response, if any, of the institution to the evaluation team report, any comments made by the institution's representatives to the Commission subsequent to the evaluation team report, and any other pertinent documents. It bases its decisions on the evaluation of the evidence before it. Institutional representatives have the opportunity to come before the Commission during the panel deliberations prior to Commission action.

The Commission may reaffirm accreditation for a period of 6, 8 or 10 years, or impose a sanction or other conditions, in accordance with the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*. Once the Commission has made a decision regarding the accreditation of an institution, it notifies the institution in the form of an action letter as promptly as possible, but no later than 30 days from the Commission meeting. Action letters may contain special conditions, limits, or restrictions, which the institution is expected to follow in order to maintain accreditation. Examples include, but are not limited to: requiring Progress Reports, Interim Reports or Special Visits; and placing restrictions on the initiation of new degree programs, the opening of additional sites, or enrollment growth. Following Commission actions, all action letters and team reports are made publicly available on the WSCUC website. A report of Commission actions is published and distributed following Commission meetings, and each institution's status is noted on the Commission website, in the Member Directory. Evaluation team reports for Comprehensive Reviews and Special Visits, as well as the Commission action letters, are also made public on the WSCUC website. (See the Policy on Disclosure of Accreditation Documents and Commission Actions.)

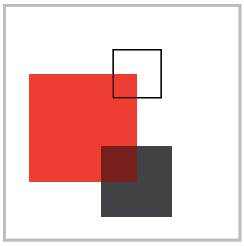
Forms of Possible Commission Action

The forms of possible Commission action with regard to institutions include:

1. Grant Candidacy or Initial Accreditation
2. Deny Candidacy or Initial Accreditation
3. Defer Action
4. Reaffirm Accreditation
5. Issue a Formal Notice of Concern
6. Issue a Sanction
   a. Warning
   b. Probation
   c. Show Cause
7. Withdraw Candidacy or Accreditation

In taking an action, the Commission may impose conditions or request additional reporting or site visits.

DECISION	MAXIMUM TERM
Grant Candidacy	5 years
Grant Initial Accreditation	6 years
Deny Candidacy or Initial Accreditation	Minimum of 1 year before reapplying
Defer Action	1 year
Reaffirm Accreditation	10 years
Issue a Formal Notice of Concern	4 years
Issue a Warning	2 years
Impose Probation	2 years
Issue Show Cause Order	1 year
Withdraw Candidacy or Accreditation	Effective on date specified



Grant Candidacy or Initial Accreditation

(See: How to Become Accredited Manual)

Candidacy: The institution must demonstrate that it meets all, or nearly all, of the Standards of Accreditation at a minimum level and has a clear plan in place to meet the Standards at a substantial level of compliance for accreditation. Candidacy is limited to five years and is granted only when an institution can demonstrate that it is likely to become accredited during the five-year period.

Initial Accreditation: The institution has met Commission Standards at a substantial level. Initial accreditation is for a period of six years before the next comprehensive review.

Deny Candidacy or Initial Accreditation

Denial of candidacy or initial accreditation reflects the Commission's finding that an institution has failed to demonstrate that it meets all, or nearly all, of the Standards of Accreditation at the required level for candidacy or initial accreditation. In this circumstance, Commission policy provides that an institution may reapply once it has demonstrated that it has addressed the issues leading to the denial. In all cases, it must wait at least one year before reapplying. (See the policy on Reapplication After Denial of Candidacy or Initial Accreditation.) Denial is an appealable action, as explained below.

Defer Action

Deferral is not a final decision. It is provisional and designed to provide time for the institution to correct specified deficiencies. This action allows the Commission to indicate to an institution the need for additional information or progress in one or more specified areas before a positive decision can be made. Deferrals are granted for a maximum period of one year.

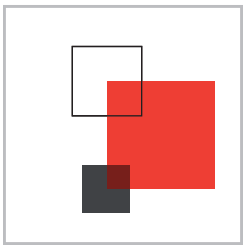
Reaffirm Accreditation

Reaffirmation of accreditation occurs at the completion of the institutional review process or when an institution is taken off of a sanction. It indicates that the Commission has found that an institution has met or exceeded the expectations of the Standards and the Core Commitments to Student Learning and Success, Quality and Improvement, and Institutional Integrity, Sustainability, and Innovation. Reaffirmation is granted for a period of 6, 8 or 10 years* and will be accompanied by a requirement for a Mid-Cycle Review to enable the Commission to discover any aresa of potential non-compliance with its Standards. The Commission may also request other reports and/or Special Visits, or a formal Notice of Concern.

Issue a Formal Notice of Concern

This action provides notice to an institution that, while it currently meets WSCUC Standards, it is in danger of being found out of compliance with one or more Standards if current trends continue. A formal Notice of Concern may also be issued when an institution is removed from a sanction and the Commission wishes to emphasize the need for continuing progress and monitoring. Institutions issued a formal Notice of Concern have a Special Visit within four years to assess progress. A Notice of Concern is public information and will be posted on the WSCUC website. If the Commission's concerns are not addressed by the time of the visit, a sanction is imposed, as described below.

* Effective fall 2015



Sanctions

Under U.S. Department of Education regulations, when the Commission finds that an institution fails to meet one or more of the Standards of Accreditation, it is required to notify the institution of these findings and give the institution up to two years from the date of this action to correct the situation. If an institution has not remedied the deficiencies at the conclusion of the two-year sanction period, the Commission is required, under U.S. Department of Education regulations, to take an "adverse action," defined in the law as the denial or withdrawal of accreditation. Thus, all institutions must address the areas cited by the Commission expeditiously, with seriousness and the full attention of the institution's leadership. It is the responsibility of the Commission to determine, at the end of the sanction period, whether the institution has corrected the situation(s) and has come into compliance with Commission Standards.

The Commission has adopted three sanctions—Warning, Probation, and Show Cause—to inform the institution and the public of the severity of its concerns about an institution's failure to meet one or more Commission Standards or one or more of any conditions or restrictions that were contained in a Commission action letter. Sanctions are not intended to be applied sequentially. Whichever sanction is imposed, the Commission is required by federal law to withdraw accreditation, rather than to continue the institution under the same or a new sanction for another two-year period, unless clear progress has been made within two years.

All sanctions are made public and are published on WSCUC's website. The institution is also expected to notify its constituents about the Commission action and WSCUC publishes the Commission action letter and related team report, in accordance with the WSCUC policy on Disclosure of Accreditation Documents and Commission Actions.

In addition, when an institution is placed on a sanction, the Commission typically requests that a meeting be held between WSCUC staff, the institution's chief executive officer, representatives of the institutional governing board, and senior faculty leadership within 90 days following the imposition of the sanction. The purposes of the meeting are to communicate the reasons for the Commission action, to learn of the institution's plan to notify the institutional community about the action, and to discuss the institution's plan for addressing the issues that gave rise to the sanction.

Federal law permits an extension of the two-year time frame when "good cause" is found. The Commission has determined that it will grant an extension for good cause only under exceptional circumstances and only when the following criteria are met:

a. The institution must have demonstrated significant accomplishments in addressing the areas of noncompliance during the period under sanction, AND

b. The institution must have demonstrated at least partial compliance with the Standard(s) cited, and, for any remaining deficiencies, demonstrate an understanding of those deficiencies, and readiness, institutional capacity, and a plan to remedy those deficiencies within the period of extension granted by the Commission.

In determining whether these criteria have been met, the Commission will also consider whether:

a. The quality of education provided by the institution is judged to be in substantial compliance with Commission Standards at the time of the extension, AND

b. The Commission has evidence of any new or continuing violations of Standard 1 regarding institutional integrity, AND

c. The Commission has evidence of other reasons or current circumstances why the institution should not be continued for "good cause."

The Commission may extend accreditation for "good cause" for a maximum of two years, depending on the seriousness of the issues involved and on its judgment of how much additional time is appropriate. By the conclusion of the extension period identified by the Commission, the institution must prepare a report that details its compliance with those Standards cited by the Commission. Demonstrated compliance with Commission Standards is required and must be supported by verifiable evidence. Progress or promises of future action after such an extension are not sufficient.

Issue a Warning

A Warning reflects the Commission's finding that an institution fails to meet one or more of the Standards of Accreditation. While on Warning, any new site or degree program initiated by the institution is regarded as a substantive change (see the Substantive Change Manual for details). The candidate or accredited status of the institution continues during the Warning period. The Commission action to issue a Warning is subject to Commission Review, described below.

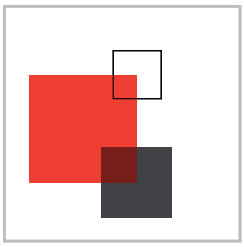
Impose Probation

Probation reflects the Commission's finding that the institution has serious issues of noncompliance with one or more of the Standards of Accreditation. While on Probation, the institution is subject to special scrutiny by the Commission, which may include a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and to receive Special Visits by representatives of the Commission. In addition, while on Probation, any new site or degree program initiated by the institution is regarded as a substantive change (see the Substantive Change Manual for details). The candidate or accredited status of the institution continues during the Probation period. The Commission action to impose Probation is subject to Commission Review, described below.

Issue an Order to Show Cause

An Order to Show Cause is a decision by the Commission to terminate the accreditation of the institution within a maximum period of one year from the date of the Order, unless the institution can show cause as to why such action should not be taken. Such an Order may be issued when an institution is found to be in substantial noncompliance with one or more Commission Standards or, having been placed on Warning or Probation for at least one year, has not been found to have made sufficient progress to come into compliance with the Standards. An Order to Show Cause may also be issued as a summary sanction for unethical institutional behavior (see Summary Sanctions for Unethical Institutional Behavior, below). In response to the Order, the institution has the burden of proving why its candidacy or accreditation should not be terminated. The institution must demonstrate that it has responded satisfactorily to Commission concerns, has come into compliance with all Commission Standards, and will likely be able to sustain compliance.

The accredited status of the institution continues during the Show Cause period, but during this period, any new site or degree program initiated by the institution is regarded as a substantive change and requires prior approval. (See the Substantive Change Manual for details). In addition, the institution may be subject to special scrutiny by the Commission, which may include special conditions and the requirement to submit prescribed reports or receive Special Visits by representatives of the Commission. The Commission action to issue and order to show cause is subject to Commission review, as described below.



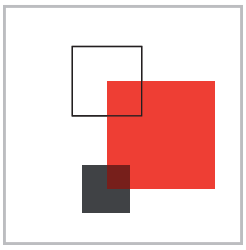
Withdraw Candidacy or Accreditation

A decision to withdraw candidacy or accreditation is made by the Commission when an institution has been found to be seriously out of compliance with one or more Standards. Although not required, a decision to withdraw accreditation may be made after an Order to Show Cause or another sanction has been imposed and the institution has failed to come into compliance. When accreditation is withdrawn, a specific date of implementation is specified. An action to withdraw candidacy or accreditation is subject to the WSCUC appeals process. If an institution closes after a withdrawl action, the institution must comply with federal requirements and WSCUC policies about teach-out arrangements. WSCUC has established policies on notice of such actions (See policy on Disclosure of Accreditation Documents and Commission Actions) and on teach-out agreements (see policy on Teach-out Plans and Agreements). See the Commission Web site for the most current version of these policies.

Summary Sanctions for Unethical Institutional Behavior

If it appears to the Commission or its staff that an institution is seriously out of compliance with Standard One (Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives) in a manner that requires immediate attention, an investigation will be made and the institution will be offered an opportunity to respond on the matter. If the Commission concludes that the institution is seriously out of compliance due to unlawful or unethical action it may:

1. Sever relations if the institution has applied for, but has not yet been granted, candidacy or accreditation; or
2. If the institution is a candidate or accredited, either:
   a. issue an Order to Show Cause why its candidacy or accreditation should not be withdrawn at the end of a stated period;
   b. in an extreme case, sever its relationship with the institution by denying or withdrawing candidacy or accreditation; or



3. Apply less severe sanctions as deemed appropriate.

Commission Review Process for Institutions on Sanction

Institutions that are placed on Warning, Probation, or Show Cause, or for which applications for Candidacy or accreditation are denied, may request a review of this decision according to the following procedures. These review procedures are designed as a continuation of the accreditation peer review process and are therefore considered to be non-adversarial.

1. When the Commission takes any of the actions listed above, its President will notify the given institution of the decision by a method requiring a signature, within approximately 14 calendar days of the Commission's decision. Said notification shall contain a succinct statement of the reasons for the Commission's decision.

2. If the institution desires a review of the Commission action, it shall file with the President a request for a review under the policies and procedures of the Commission. This request is to be submitted by the chief executive officer of the institution and co-signed by the chair of the governing board. Requests for review by an institution in a multi-college system shall also be signed by the chief executive officer of the system. The request for review must be received by a method requiring a signature, within 28 calendar days of the date of the mailing of the Commission's notification of its decision to the institution. The fee for the review process shall accompany the request.

3. Within 21 calendar days after the date of its request for review, the institution, through its chief executive officer, must submit a written statement of the specific reasons why, in the institution's opinion, a review of the Commission's decision is warranted. This written statement shall respond only to the Commission's statement of reasons for the Commission's decision and to the evidence that was before the Commission at the time of its decision. In so doing, the institution shall identify the basis for its request for review in one or more of the following areas: (1) there were errors or omissions in carrying out prescribed procedures on the part of the evaluation team and/or the Commission which materially affected the Commission's decision; (2) there was demonstrable bias or prejudice on the part of one or more members of the evaluation team or Commission which materially affected the Commission's decision; (3) the evidence before the Commission prior to and on the date when it made the decision that is being questioned was materially in error; or (4) the decision of the Commission was not supported by substantial evidence.

   The institution may not introduce evidence that was not received by the Commission at the time it made the decision under review.

   It is the responsibility of the institution to identify in the statement of reasons what specific information was not considered, or was improperly considered, by the visiting team or the Commission and to demonstrate that such acts or omissions were a material factor in the negative decision under review.

   The statement of reasons will be reviewed by Commission staff for compliance with this provision. If, in the judgment of Commission staff, the statement of reasons is deficient, it will be forwarded to the Commission chair. Should the Commission chair concur with the judgment of Commission staff, no review committee will be appointed and the statement will be returned to the institution.

   If the statement of reasons is returned, the institution will be provided the opportunity to revise the statement within 21 calendar days from the date the notice of return is sent to the institution. Should the institution resubmit its statement of reasons within the prescribed time period, the revised statement will be reviewed by Commission staff. If the revised statement is still found to be deficient, it will be forwarded to the Commission chair. Should the Commission chair concur that the revised statement is deficient, no review committee will be appointed. This action is final.

4. On acceptance of the institution's written statement referred to in 3. above, a committee of three or more persons will be selected by Commission staff to serve as the review committee. A roster of the review committee will be sent to the institution, normally within 30 calendar days of the date of the Commission's receipt of the institution's written statement. No person who has served as a member of the visiting team whose report is subject to review shall be eligible to serve on the review committee. The institution will be provided opportunity to object for cause to any of the proposed review committee members. After giving the institution this opportunity, Commission staff will finalize the membership of the review committee.

5. Within a reasonable period of time after the review committee has been selected, the President will schedule a meeting of the review committee at a location separate from the institution and Commission offices. No assurance can be made that the review committee process will take place in time for the review to be included on the agenda of the next Commission meeting.

6. Prior to the meeting of the review committee, the committee members will review available information. If additional information is needed, the chair of the review committee may request such information from the chief executive officer of the institution, Commission staff, or the visiting team, before, during, or after the meeting of the review committee.

7. The review will be investigative and designed to determine if any of the grounds for review cited by the institution are valid.

8. Commission staff other than the WSCUC liaison for the contested Commission action will assist the review committee as needed. The Committee may interview, among others, Commission readers, the chair or members of the previous visiting team, and the Commission staff member who supported the team visit. Outside legal counsel is not permitted to attend or be present in meetings with the review committee without consent of the review committee chair. If allowed to be present, legal counsel will not be allowed to conduct any part of the proceedings but will be permitted to advise institutional representatives as needed. The Commission legal counsel may advise the review committee, but may not attend those portions of the review committee's meetings when it is meeting with institutional representatives, unless legal counsel for the institution is also permitted to be present.

9. The review committee should open and close its meeting with the chief executive officer or other institutional representatives by attempting to ascertain whether or not the institution has any complaints about any aspect of the review process. All written evidence is to be provided to the review committee together with the institution's request for review. The Commission office shall provide the review committee with documents that were available to the Commission at the time of its action. If additional information is requested from the institution, it is to be provided at least seven business days in advance of the review committee's meeting. The review committee is only allowed to consider evidence that was available to or known by the Commission at the time of its taking action. No new evidence or information relating to actions or events subsequent to the date of the Commission action is to be presented or considered by the review committee.

10. The review committee shall prepare a report that states the reasons for the Commission action, identifies each reason advanced by the institution in its request for review, and, for each reason, evaluates the evidence that the institution has presented in support of its request for review. In addition, the review committee may evaluate additional evidence that, in its opinion, is relevant to its recommendation to the Commission. The report shall state only findings of fact and not consider or cite any evidence relating to facts or events occurring after the date of Commission action.

11. The chair of the review committee will submit a copy of the review committee's report that is referred to in 10. above to the chief executive officer of the institution, the chair of the institution's governing board, and the President of the Commission, normally within 30 calendar days of the end of the review committee's meeting.

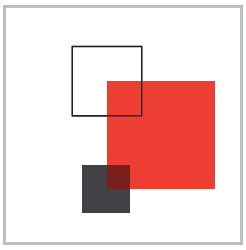
12. In a confidential letter to the Commission, the review committee will recommend whether the Commission decision that is under review should be affirmed or modified. This recommendation of the review committee to the Commission will not be disclosed to the institution being reviewed. The recommendation is not binding on the Commission.

13. Within 14 calendar days of the institution's receipt of the review committee's report, the chief executive officer will submit a written response to the President of the Commission, with a copy to the chair of the review committee, for transmittal to the Commission. The review will be placed on the agenda of an upcoming Commission meeting, for consideration by the Commission.

14. Prior to the Commission meeting, a reader meeting will be conducted by conference call or in person where the chief executive officer of the institution and a limited number of institutional representatives will be invited to discuss the review committee report with those Commissioners designated as readers. The chair of the review committee will also be invited to participate in the call. Discussion at this reader meeting will be confined to the report of the review committee referred to in 10. above and to the institution's response to this report.

15. The Commission readers will report the substance of this meeting to the Commission when it meets. Institutional representatives will be invited to appear before the Commission before it takes action.

16. The Commission will reach a final decision to: (1) reaffirm its original decision; (2) modify it; or (3) reverse it. As soon after the meeting as is practicable, the President will notify the chief executive officer of the institution, by a method requiring a signature, of the Commission's decision.



17. Special charges for the review process have been established by the Commission. A list of these charges is available from the Commission office and on the Commission website.
18. The Commission may develop any necessary procedures and instructions to review committees to implement this process. These materials will be available from the Commission office.

Commission Decisions Regarding Accreditation Status

The Commission will provide written notice to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency, other accrediting agencies, WSCUC-accredited and candidate institutions, and the public no later than 30 days after it makes:

- A decision to grant Initial Accreditation, Candidacy, or Reaffirmation;
- A final decision to place an institution on Warning, Probation, or Show Cause;
- A final decision to deny or withdraw Candidacy or accreditation;
- Final approval of all substantive and structural changes.

No later than 60 days after a final decision to deny or withdraw accreditation, the Commission will make available to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency, and the public upon request, a brief statement summarizing the reasons for the agency's decision.

Institutional Decisions Regarding Accreditation Status

The Commission will, within 30 days, notify the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate state licensing or authorizing agency, and the public upon request, if an institution:

- Voluntarily withdraws from Candidacy or accreditation; or
- Allows its Candidacy or accreditation to lapse.

Regard for Decisions of Other Agencies

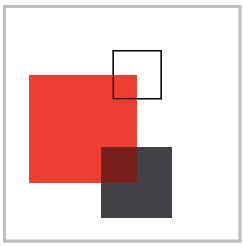
If the Commission is notified by another recognized accrediting agency that an applicant or candidate institution has had a status of recognition with that agency denied, revoked, or withdrawn, the Commission will take such action into account in its own review if it is determined that the other agency's action resulted from an institutional deficiency that reflects a lack of compliance with the WSCUC Standards of Accreditation.

If the Commission is notified by another recognized accrediting agency that an accredited institution has had a status of recognition with that agency revoked, suspended, or withdrawn, or has been placed on a publicly announced probationary status by such an accrediting agency, the Commission will review its own status of recognition of that institution to determine if the other agency's action resulted from an institutional deficiency that reflects a lack of compliance with WSCUC's Standards of Accreditation. If so, the Commission will determine if the institution's status with the Commission needs to be called into question, or if any follow-up action is needed.

If the Commission is notified by a state agency that an applicant, candidate, or accredited institution has been informed of suspension, revocation, or withdrawl of the institution's legal authority to provide postsecondary education, the Commission will review its own status of recognition for that institution to determine compliance with the Standards of Accreditation. If the Commission finds the institution is no longer in compliance with the Standards, the Commission will determine the appropriate action to be taken.

In implementing this policy, the Commission relies on other accrediting bodies and state agencies to inform the Commission of their actions so that the Commission can undertake the review specified in this policy. Applicants for eligibility with the Commission shall provide information on any actions by a recognized accrediting association within the past five years. In addition, the Commission requires candidate and accredited institutions holding accredited or candidate status from more than one USDE-recognized accrediting body to keep each accrediting body apprised of any change in its status with one or another accrediting body.

WSCUC Glossary



A glossary of terms related to accreditation and educational effectiveness is provided below. Many of these terms have multiple meanings and/or have been used in different ways by different associations, institutions, and individuals. The definitions that follow represent the way WSCUC typically uses these words for purposes of institutional review and reporting. If local usage differs significantly from the definitions below, the institution should translate its terms for accreditation purposes to avoid misunderstanding on the part of the evaluation team, WSCUC staff, and others.

A

AAC&U – See "Association of American Colleges and Universities."

Academic freedom – institutional policies and practices that affirm that those in the academy are free to share their convictions and responsible conclusions with their colleagues and students in their teaching, research, and writing. According to the AAUP statement on academic freedom, teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but should not introduce controversial matter that has no relation to their subject.

Academic Resource Conference (ARC) – annual meeting sponsored by the WASC Senior College and University Commission.

ACCJC – See "Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges."

Accountability – in higher education, being answerable to the public, e.g., students, parents, policymakers, employers. Historically, accountability has focused on financial resources; emphasis now extends to students' academic progress, including retention, acquisition of knowledge and skills, and degree completion.

Accreditation – as practiced by WSCUC and other regional accrediting associations, a voluntary, non-governmental, peer-based form of quality assurance at the institutional level. To receive or reaffirm accredited status, institutions demonstrate that they are in compliance with state and federal law and meet the accrediting association's standards. Accrediting associations must be recognized by the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) in order for their accredited institutions to qualify for federal grants and loans to students.

Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) – the individual at an institution who is assigned to conduct continuing relations with the accrediting agency and to oversee processes associated with the institution's accreditation status.

Accrediting body or agency – a voluntary, non-governmental association established to evaluate and approve educational institutions or programs. Some accrediting bodies are recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to establish institutional eligibility for distribution of certain federal funds such as student loans and grants.

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) – agency that accredits two-year institutions in California, Hawai'i, and U.S. territories in the Pacific Basin. See "WSCUC."

Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS) – agency that accredits K-12 institutions in California, Hawai'i, and U.S. territories in the Pacific Basin.

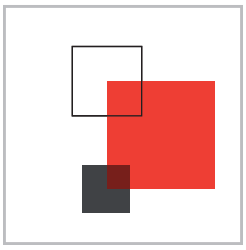
ACS – See "Accrediting Commission for Schools."

Action letter – an official, public statement of findings, approved by the WSCUC Senior College and University Commission and signed by the WSCUC president, at the conclusion of the institutional review process. The letter typically commends exemplary institutional efforts, notes areas for improvement, contains recommendations, sets the number of years until the next review for reaccreditation, and may impose other conditions such as an Interim Report or Special Visit.

Alignment – connections among functions or dimensions of an institution that support achievement of goals, e.g., among curriculum, pedagogy, and expected outcomes; or priorities, planning, and resource allocation.

ALO – see "Accreditation Liaison Officer."

American Association of University Professors (AAUP) – organization whose purpose is to advance academic freedom and shared governance; define professional values and standards



for higher education; and support higher education's contribution to the common good.

Appeal of Commission Action – the final stage of the WSCUC review process related to adverse actions, under which Commission decisions to deny or withdraw candidacy or accreditation may be appealed.

ARC – see "Academic Resource Conference."

Assessment (of student learning) – an ongoing, iterative process consisting of four basic steps: 1. defining learning outcomes; 2. choosing a method or approach and then using it to gather evidence of learning; 3. analyzing and interpreting the evidence; and 4. using this information to improve student learning.

Assessment method – a way to collect evidence of student learning. See "direct method" and "indirect method."

Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) – Washington, D.C.-based national organization dedicated to promotion of liberal learning and its integration with professional and civic education.

B

Baccalaureate – see "Degrees, B.A., B.M., and B.S."

Benchmark – a point of reference or standard of excellence in relation to which something can be compared and judged. A specific level of student performance may serve as the benchmark that students are expected to meet at a particular point in time or developmental level. Retention and graduation rates may also be benchmarked against those of peer institutions or national norms.

Board of Trustees; also Board of Regents, Board of Directors – the governing body that bears ultimate legal and fiduciary responsibility for the smooth functioning and quality of the educational institution. The board makes high-level decisions regarding finances, the physical plant, academic programs, and other matters, operating at the level of policy, not management. The president answers to and is evaluated by the board.

C

Candidacy – a status of preliminary affiliation with WSCUC, awarded for a maximum of four years following a procedure for institutional review that includes self-study and on-site visitation. Candidacy indicates that the institution meets all or nearly all the Standards at a minimum level. Candidacy is not accreditation and does not ensure eventual accreditation; it means that an institution is progressing toward accreditation.

Capstone – a culminating project or experience, usually associated with undergraduates but also applicable to graduate education, that generally takes place in the student's final year of study and requires review, synthesis, and application of what has been learned over the course of the student's college experience. The result may be a product (e.g., original research, an innovative engineering design, an art exhibit) or a performance (e.g., a recital, an internship, student teaching). The capstone can provide evidence for assessment of a range of outcomes, e.g., core competencies, general education outcomes, and institution-level outcomes, as well as those for the major or graduate degree.

CFR – See "Criterion for Review."

Co-curricular learning – learning that takes place in activities and programs that are not part of the prescribed sequence of courses in an academic program.

College – a term with multiple meanings in U.S. usage: 1. historically, a small, undergraduate liberal arts institution; 2. a generic term, sometimes used as a synonym for university, to denote any postsecondary educational institution, including universities; 3. a grouping of related disciplines within a university, e.g., College of Engineering.

College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) – survey developed in 1979 to gauge quality of effort and engagement. A forerunner of NSSE, the CSEQ contributed to the shift to studying behaviors as indicators of the student experience. The CCSEQ is designed for community college students.

Commission, also WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) – refers to the WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC); may denote either the entire senior college organization or its decision-making body.

Comparative data – data drawn from other sources: from within or, more typically, from outside the institution. Comparative data can enhance meaning and contextual understanding of the primary data being reviewed and analyzed.

Competency – in assessment of student learning, a specific skill, body of knowledge, or disposition; can also refer to the student's ability to demonstrate that learning. "Competency" is sometimes used interchangeably with "outcome," "objective," and "ability."

Complaint – a written and signed complaint, based on WSCUC Standards, that may be submitted to WSCUC about an institution, or

against WSCUC.

Completion, also degree completion – signifies that students are able to graduate, having completed all requirements for their degree; sometimes used as a synonym for "graduation."

Context – the institution's mission, values, student body, and other factors that influence student- and institution-level outcomes.

Core commitments – WSCUC's Standards and process are founded on three Core Commitments to: student learning and success; quality and improvement; and institutional integrity, sustainability, and accountability. WSCUC-accredited institutions demonstrate their adherence to these commitments through the Institutional Review Process.

Core competencies – as defined in WSCUC Standard 2, Criterion for Review 2.2, institutions report on graduating students' levels of performance in five core competencies: written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and information literacy. Not to be confused with "core curriculum" (see "core curriculum").

Core curriculum – 1. an approach to general education that requires all students to take the same set of courses, rather than choosing from a variety of options; 2. sometimes used as a synonym for general education. See also "general education."

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) – Washington, D.C.-based organization of degree-granting colleges and universities that advocates for self-regulation of academic quality through peer-based accreditation.

Course – a learning experience of defined scope and duration, with intended learning outcomes, as described in a catalog, bulletin, or syllabus.

Credit, unit of; credit hour – a commonly accepted quantification of student academic learning. One semester unit represents the time a student is expected to devote to learning in one week of full-time undergraduate study (typically two to three hours of preparation for each hour of class, or the equivalent, for a full-time course load of 14 to 16 units per semester). At the graduate level, typically, more than three hours of study for every hour in class is expected. Institutions using other academic calendars generally calculate units of credit relative to semester units. For example, one (15-week) semester unit may be equated to 1.5 (10-week) quarter units.

Criterion – a characteristic mark or trait on the basis of which a judgment may be made. Criteria for good writing, for example, may be the ability to state a position clearly, support the position, anticipate contradictory arguments, and do so in error-free language.

Criterion for Review (CFR) – as used by WSCUC, a Criterion for Review (CFR) is a statement in relation to which an institution is reviewed. Criteria for Review are more specific than the four Standards of Accreditation and are intended to define and explain the Standards. Substantial compliance with both the Standards and Criteria for Review is required by state and federal laws for accreditation. CFRs also provide guidance to institutions and form the basis for Commission decisions about an institution's accreditation status.

Critical thinking – the ability to think in a way that is clear, reasoned, reflective, informed by evidence, and aimed at deciding what to believe or do. Dispositions supporting critical thinking include open-mindedness and motivation to seek the truth.

CSEQ – See "College Student Experiences Questionnaire."

Culture of evidence – a habit of using evidence in assessment, decision making, planning, resource allocation, and other institutional processes that is embedded in and characteristic of an institution's actions and practices.

D

Defer action – deferral is not a final decision; it authorizes time for the institution to correct specified deficiencies, provide additional information, or make progress in defined areas before a decision can be made regarding reaccreditation. Deferrals are granted for a maximum period of one year.

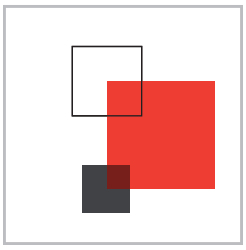
Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) – a framework funded by the Lumina Foundation that describes the kinds of learning and levels of performance that may be expected of students who have earned an associate, baccalaureate, or master's degree.

Diversity – the representation and recognition of people of different backgrounds and points of view in the various constituencies of a college or university, e.g., student body, faculty, staff, and governing board.

DQP – See "Degree Qualifications Profile."

E

Educational effectiveness (EE) – producing the intended learning results in an educational endeavor. As used by WSCUC, educational effectiveness includes clear and appropriate educational outcomes and objectives; and alignment at the institutional and program level of resources and



processes, including assessment, to ensure delivery of programs and learner accomplishments at a level of performance appropriate to the degree or certificate awarded. At the institutional level, findings about learning are integrated into planning, budgeting, and decision making.

Educator – an individual who supports students in becoming educated. In the WSCUC context, refers to staff at institutions of higher education who may not be designated as faculty but contribute to students' learning, e.g., librarians, student affairs and student services personnel, advisors, counselors, tutors.

EE – See "educational effectiveness."

Eligibility – a status conferred on non-WSCUC-accredited institutions after committee review; signifies the institution meets basic criteria and in the judgment of the committee has the potential to meet WSCUC Standards at a minimum level and thus progress to Candidacy.

Eligibility Review Committee (ERC) – a standing committee of WSCUC that conducts reviews of the applications received from institutions seeking WSCUC accreditation to determine whether the institution has the potential to meet the Standards and other requirements.

ERC – See "Eligibility Review Committee."

Evaluation – a process for measuring and judging the quality of performance of an institution, a program, a process, or individuals, e.g., instructors, administrators. While assessment of student learning and evaluation processes are related, they do differ and it is best not to use the terms interchangeably.

Exhibits – the required data, documents, and other items that are included as part of the institutional report and are reviewed for reaffirmation of accreditation.

Experiential learning – See "prior learning assessment."

External – outside. In higher education, "external" may mean outside of the immediate department or unit, outside of the division or college, or outside of the institution. Including external representatives in quality assurance processes can provide insight into program quality and areas for improvement; it also lends greater credibility to reviews and institutional claims to quality.

F

Faculty – instructional staff of an institution responsible for the design, delivery, and assessment of academic programs. It is up to each institution to determine who holds faculty status. In WSCUC usage, "faculty" does not typically include administrators, counselors, or other campus educators, e.g., in student service personnel. Full-time faculty members are those whose primary employment obligation is to teaching and research at the institution. Part-time or adjunct faculty members may have continuing contracts and be involved in program development and review, governance, and other matters; or they may be assigned a specified number of classes with few or no other responsibilities to the institution. The institution is responsible for having clear policies on faculty roles and responsibilities.

Faculty Evaluation – a practice to determine the effectiveness of faculty teaching a course, typically in the form of surveys administered to students enrolled in the course and posing questions about the instructor's knowledge of material, clarity of presentation, accessibility, etc. Accuracy and usefulness have been debated, but results may influence tenure, promotion, and merit decisions. Should not be confused with assessment of student learning, which is typically a collective activity focused on aggregate student learning results.

Financial Review Committee (FRC)—a standing committee of WSCUC that conducts reviews of financial data to evaluate the financial viability of institutions and identifies institutions that may require follow-up action or monitoring.

Focus group – a qualitative assessment method that uses small-group discussions, led by a facilitator and following a protocol, to gather information about attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. Responses are recorded and then analyzed. Although focus groups are usually considered an indirect method, they have been used to provide direct evidence, e.g., of students' ability to apply learning or demonstrate institutional values.

Formal Notice of Concern – a WSCUC action that serves notice to the institution that, while it currently meets WSCUC Standards, it is in danger of being found out of compliance with one or more Standards if certain trends continue. It may also be issued if an institution is removed from sanction and the Commission wishes to emphasize the need for continuing progress. Formal Notice of Concern requires a Special Visit within four years to assess progress. If the Commission's concerns are not addressed by that time, a sanction is imposed.

FRC – See "Financial Review Committee."

G

General education – the portion of an undergraduate course of study that provides general background knowledge and develops generic higher-order intellectual skills. General education can take many forms. Some programs are "foun-

dational," i.e., students complete required courses before going on to the major; other programs run parallel with study in the major over the entire college career; still others integrate the learning outcomes of general education into other coursework.

Goal – 1. in assessment of student learning, a high-level, very general statement of learning expected of graduates, aligned with the institution's mission, vision, and values (more specific learning outcomes are derived from goals); 2. a statement developed by an institution or program related to strategic planning, financial development, and other important issues.

Grade – in U.S. higher education, usually a letter ranging from A through D (with F for failure) that indicates the quality of student work and performance in a given course.

Guideline – statement in WSCUC's *2013 Handbook of Accreditation* accompanying a Criterion for Review that indicates normative ways institutions address that CFR. Guidelines are intended to be suggestive, not prescriptive; institutions are free to demonstrate in other ways that they comply with the basic principle set forth in the CFR.

H

High-impact practice (HIP) – HIPs include first-year seminars, common intellectual experiences, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments, undergraduate research, diversity/global learning, service learning, internships, and capstone courses or projects. Research suggests that if students experience one or more HIPs in the course of their studies, they are more likely to persist, achieve higher levels of learning, and complete their degrees.

Higher education – postsecondary education, i.e., beyond high school, leading to academic degrees or credentials.

I

ILO – See "outcome."

Information literacy - according the Association of College and Research Libraries, the ability to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use the needed information" for a wide range of purposes. An information-literate individual is able to determine the extent of information needed, access it, evaluate it and its sources, use the information effectively, and do so ethically and legally.

Initial accreditation – indicates that the institution has met the Senior College and University Commission's Standards at a substantial level. Initial accreditation may be awarded for a period of five to seven years before the next comprehensive review.

Institutional research – 1. collection of institutional data useful for analysis, planning, and accreditation review; 2. the office that collects, organizes, and reports such data.

Institutional Review Process (IRP) – in WSCUC usage, periodic review of an institution for Reaffirmation of Accreditation. Documentation includes earlier reviewers' findings from annual reports and focused reviews (e.g., substantive change, finance, retention and graduation); the institution's response to earlier recommendations; and responses to current Standards of Accreditation and expectations. The institution undertakes a self-study and submits an institutional report; the evaluation team then conducts Offsite and Onsite Reviews. The IRP culminates in a team report, Senior College and University Commission action, action letter, and posting of the team report and action letter on the WSCUC website.

Interim report – a report, generally requested by the Senior College and University Commission following a comprehensive review for reaccreditation, in which the institution can describe its progress in complying with specific Commission recommendations.

Interim Report Committee (IRC) – a standing committee of WSCUC that reviews interim reports and supporting documents, following up on recommendations that have been made in a Commission action letter or previous Interim Report.

Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators – an inventory of an institution's assessment processes for each of its degree programs. Required as part of the process for Initial Accreditation and Reaffirmation of accreditation.

IR – See "Institutional research."

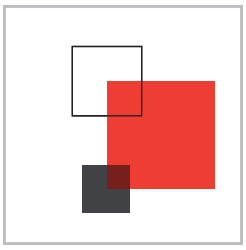
IRC – See "Interim Report Committee."

IRP – See "Institutional Review Process."

L

LEAP – See "Liberal Education and America's Promise."

Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) – a project of AAC&U, the LEAP outcomes (also known as Essential Learning Outcomes) total 12, grouped under the headings "Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Natural and Physical World," "Intellectual and Practical Skills," "Personal and Social Responsibility," and



"Integrative and Applied Learning."

Lines of Inquiry—a summary document prepared by the evaluation team after the Offsite review that identifies issues for follow up during the visit.

M

Meaning, quality, and integrity of the degree (MQID) – in WSCUC usage, a phrase that refers to the goals, coherence, sequencing, alignment, resourcing, and overall quality of the educational experience leading to conferral of an institution's degree.

Mid-Cycle Review (MCR) – a review near the midpoint of an institution's period of accreditation focusing on student achievement and an updated Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators.

Mission – in higher education, an institution's formally adopted statement of its fundamental reasons for existence, its shared purposes and values, and the students that it aims to serve. The mission is central to decisions about priorities and strategic objectives and provides a context for WSCUC decisions about quality and accreditation.

N

NSSE – See "National Survey of Student Engagement."

O

Objective – 1. in assessment of student learning, a concise statement of what the instructor (or program or institution) intends a student to learn (on some campuses, objectives then lead to development of learning outcomes); 2. sometimes used interchangeably with "outcome," but "outcome" has become the more common usage because of its more direct focus on the result (or "outcome") for the student; 3. in institution- or program-level planning, more specific statements derived from general goals; 4. in psychometrics, a test consisting of factual questions requiring short answers that can be reliably scored using an answer key, minimizing subjective judgments.

Offsite Review – the first major stage of WSCUC review for reaccreditation. Carried out by an evaluation team that examines the institutional report, and other documentation. Offsite review leads to preliminary findings (called Lines of Inquiry) that are subsequently verified by the evaluation team during an physical visit to the institution.

Oral communication – communication by means of spoken language for informational, persuasive, and expressive purposes. In addition to speech, oral communication may employ visual aids, body language, intonation, and other non-verbal elements to support the conveyance of meaning and connection with the audience. Oral communication may include speeches, presentations, discussions, dialogue, and other forms of interpersonal communication, either delivered face to face or mediated technologically.

Order to Show Cause – a Senior College and University Commission action to withdraw the accreditation of an institution unless the institution can show cause why such an action should not be taken. Such action may be taken 1. when the institution is found to be in substantial noncompliance with one or more of the Standards; 2. when, having been placed on Warning or Probation for at least one year, it has not made sufficient progress. Also, an Order may be issued as a summary sanction for unethical institutional behavior. In response, the institution has the burden of proving why its accreditation should not be withdrawn The accredited status of the institution continues during Show Cause, but the institution is subject to special scrutiny by the Commission, which may require reports and special visits.

Outcome – 1. in assessment of student learning, a concise statement of what the student should know or be able to do. Well-articulated learning outcomes describe how a student can demonstrate the desired outcome; verbs such as "understand" or "appreciate" are avoided in favor of observable actions, e.g., "identify," "analyze." Learning outcomes can be formulated for different levels of aggregation and analysis. Student learning outcomes are commonly abbreviated as SLOs, course learning outcomes as CLOs, program learning outcomes as PLOs, and institution-level outcomes as ILOs. 2. Other outcomes may address access, retention and graduation, and other indicators aligned with institutional mission and goals.

P

Peer review – in higher education, a quality assurance process for purposes of improvement and accreditation that draws upon individuals active in the field of higher education.

Peer reviewer – a person who is professionally qualified to review an educational or other program, either for internal quality assurance and improvement or for accreditation purposes.

Planning – the development of a design by which an institution sets goals and objectives and identifies the means to measure their accomplishment. Institutional planning may address educa-

tional programs, support services, the physical plant, budgets and finances, and other aspects of institutional operation and future development.

Policy – in WSCUC usage, a binding statement that reflects the will of the Senior College and University Commission and/or the U.S. Department of Education. Some policies are relevant to all institutions, e.g. the WASC policy on Accreditation Liaison Officer; others are relevant only to those institutions whose activities fall within the scope of the policy, e.g. WASC policies on collegiate athletics, distance education.

Portfolio – in assessment of student learning, a method of collecting student work so that the evidence can be reviewed in relation to specific learning outcomes. Most student portfolios also include a reflection on the learning process. Portfolios are highly adaptable: they may be developmental (showing progress from rough draft to finished product) or cumulative (i.e., students' "best work"); and they may be assembled at the level of the individual student, program, or institution.

President – a term commonly used to signify the chief executive officer (CEO) of an institution; in some systems, referred to as Chancellor.

Private institution – See "independent institution."

Probation – a Senior College and University Commission action that indicates a finding that the institution is seriously out of compliance with one or more of the Standards. While on Probation, the institution is subject to special scrutiny by the Commission, which may include a requirement to submit periodic reports and receive special visits. The accredited status of the institution continues during the two-year Probation period. Imposition of Probation is subject to Commission Review.

Professional program – an educational program designed to prepare students for a specific profession. It may apply to both undergraduate and graduate programs that prepare students for direct entry into employment. Graduate-level professional programs typically presuppose an undergraduate degree.

Proficiency – the level of knowledge or degree of skill that a student has achieved.

Program – 1. a systematic, usually sequential, grouping of courses that forms a considerable part, or all, of the requirements for a degree in a major or professional field; 2. sometimes refers to the total educational offering of an institution.

Program review – a systematic process of examining the capacity, processes, and outcomes of a degree program or department in order to judge its quality and effectiveness and to support improvement. Historically, program review focused primarily on capacity and research output; more recently, educational outcomes and student success have been included. While student success and assessment of learning at the program level are an important part of program review, they should not be confused with the more encompassing process of program review.

Progress report – a report, generally requested by the Senior College and University Commission following a comprehensive review for reaccreditation, in which the institution can describe progress in complying with specific Commission recommendations.

Public good – in higher education, a phrase expressing the notion that in addition to being a private good for individual students, education is a public good contributing to shared prosperity, a successful democracy, and a well-functioning society. As a public good, higher education is worthy of public support.

Public trust – a phrase expressing the notion that certain natural and cultural resources belong to all the people; are created to promote the general welfare, not to benefit particular individuals; are maintained for the public's benefit; and are managed in the interests of the public. Critics of higher education charge that institutions and their leaders have betrayed the public trust, e.g., through lowered standards, high costs, and insufficient responsiveness to public concerns.

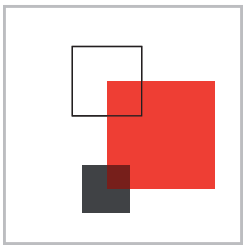
Q

Quality assurance – any process for systematic monitoring and evaluation to ensure that standards of quality are being met. Higher education has many traditional processes for quality assurance, including review of courses and programs, tenure review, program review, annual reports, personnel evaluations, peer review of research and publications, and assessment of student learning.

Quantitative reasoning – the ability to apply mathematical concepts to the interpretation and analysis of quantitative information in order to solve a wide range of problems, from those arising in pure and applied research to everyday issues and questions. It may include such dimensions as ability to apply math skills, judge reasonableness, communicate quantitative information, and recognize the limits of mathematical or statistical methods.

R

Reaffirm accreditation – a Senior College and University Commission action that occurs at the end of the institutional review process or when an institution is taken off a sanction; indicates that the institution has met or exceeded the expectations of the Standards. It is granted for a period of seven



to 10 years and may be accompanied by a request for an interim report or special visit; simultaneous issuance of a formal Notice of Concern is also possible.

Research – collection, analysis, and publication of data, studies, or other findings in order to expand a field of knowledge or its application.

Retention – typically refers to the rate at which students return and re-enroll in college from semester to semester and year to year; retention rates from first to second year are of particular interest, since that is when the heaviest attrition is likely to occur. See also "persistence."

Review under the WSCUC Standards and Compliance with Federal Requirements – a worksheet used in the reaccreditation process to identify an institution's strengths, areas for improvement, and compliance with WSCUC standards and federal requirements.

Rigor – in education, refers both to a challenging curriculum and to the consistency or stringency with which high standards for student learning and performance are upheld.

Rubric – 1. a tool for scoring student work or performances, typically in the form of a table or matrix, with criteria that describe the dimensions of the outcome down the left-hand vertical axis, and levels of performance across the horizontal axis. The work or performance may be given an overall score (holistic scoring), or criteria may be scored individually (analytic scoring). Rubrics are also used to communicate expectations to students. 2. WASC has developed a number of rubrics to assist teams and institutions in evaluating various aspects of their curriculum and assessment processes.

S

Sanction – a Warning, Probation, or Show Cause. Under U.S. Department of Education regulations, when the Senior College and University Commission finds that an institution fails to meet one or more of the Standards, it is required to notify the institution of this finding, issue a sanction, and give the institution up to two years from the date of the action to correct the situation. If the institution has not remedied deficiencies at the end of the two-year sanction period, the Commission is required under federal regulations to terminate accreditation. Warning, Probation, and Show Cause represent rising degrees of concern, but sanctions need not be applied sequentially. Whichever sanction is imposed, the Commission is required by federal law to withdraw accreditation, rather than continue the institution under the same or a new sanction for another two-year period, unless clear progress has been made within two years.

SCC – See "Substantive Change Committee."

Scholarship – 1. the act of study and/or research; 2. the knowledge that results from study and research in a particular field. In Scholarship Reconsidered (1991), Ernest Boyer defined four kinds of scholarship: discovery, integration, application, and teaching. His new paradigm recognized the full range of scholarly activity engaged in by college and university faculty and questioned a reward system that prioritized research and publication while devaluing teaching. Since then, the scholarship of teaching and learning has gained increasing respect.

School – in U.S. usage, 1. refers primarily to institutions offering primary and secondary education; 2. may also denote a grouping of related disciplines, usually professional/applied, within a university, e.g., School of Allied Health. Also, in casual parlance, a synonym for "college" or "university."

Show Cause – See "Order to Show Cause."

Signature assignment – an embedded assessment method using an assignment—either the identical assignment or multiple assignments all constructed according to a common template—across multiple courses or sections of courses. A sample of students' work products is then examined using a rubric to arrive at judgments about the quality of student learning across the course, program, or institution. Alternatively, a signature question may be embedded, for example, in final exams.

SLO – See "outcome."

Special Visit – a focused visit, which may be requested by the Commission or less frequently by a standing committee, to follow up on a specific area of concern.

Standard – broadly refers to statements of expectations for student learning, which may include content standards, performance standards, and benchmarks. In the K-12 arena, standards generally describe content, but not level of mastery. In higher education, in contrast, standards generally refer to expected levels of mastery or proficiency. Not to be confused with standards of accreditation.

Standard of performance – the degree of skill or proficiency with which a student demonstrates a learning outcome. WSCUC Standard 2, CFR 2.2a, requires institutions to report on their students' levels of performance at or near the time of graduation in five core competencies: writing, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and information literacy. Standards of performance are set by faculty and other educators on campus.

Standards of accreditation – standards of accreditation are the principles used as a basis for judgment in accreditation reviews. WSCUC has four Standards that flow from three Core Commitments. They are used to guide institutions in assessing institutional performance, to identify areas needing improvement, and to serve as the basis for judgment of the institution by evaluation teams and WSCUC.

Student success – a phrase often used as shorthand for retention and degree completion. For WSCUC, student success includes quality of learning and rigor as well as retention and completion.

Substantive Change Committee (SCC) – a standing committee of WSCUC that reviews proposals for changes that may significantly affect an institution's quality, objectives, scope, or control. The Commission requires prior approval of institutional substantive changes in degree programs, methods of delivery, and organizational changes.

Summary sanction for unethical institutional behavior – if it appears to the Senior College and University Commission that an institution is seriously out of compliance with Standard 1 (Institutional Purposes and Integrity) in a manner that requires immediate attention, an investigation is made and the institution has an opportunity to respond. If the Commission concludes that a sanction is warranted, it may issue an Order to Show Cause or a less severe sanction, as appropriate.

Sustainability – ability of an educational institution to maintain effective functioning and improve over the long term. Assumes financial viability, but also availability of human capital and other resources, as well as institutional vision, planning, and flexibility.

T

Team (also accreditation team, evaluation team, visiting team) – a group of peers from the higher education community that is selected and trained to review an institution's institutional report, data exhibits, and other documents; conduct Offsite and on-site reviews; and write a report on its findings and recommendations.

Transparency – disclosure by postsecondary institutions of information that may be sought by or of interest to policymakers, stakeholders, or the public. Such information may include financial data, retention and graduation rates, and various indicators of educational quality. Transparency and accountability are assumed to be mutually reinforcing.

U

UCUES – see "University of California Undergraduate Experiences Survey."

University – an institution of higher education with undergraduate- and graduate- or only-graduate-level degree programs and adequate resources to support them, as defined by the Standards.

V

VALUE rubrics – Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education. A set of 15 rubrics developed by AAC&U in collaboration with hundreds of faculty to assess learning outcomes defined by the LEAP project. Institutions may download the rubrics at no cost and are encouraged to modify them to suit local needs.

Visit – in the WSCUC context of institutional reaccreditation, the second major stage of institutional review. Refers to the presence of an evaluation team at a campus or institutional headquarters to verify and finalize findings regarding compliance and improvement that have been reached tentatively during the Offsite review. See also "Offsite review."

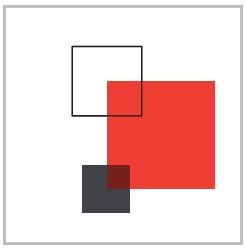
W

Warning – a sanction that reflects WSCUC's finding that an institution fails to meet one or more of the Standards of Accreditation. Accredited status of the institution continues during the Warning period, which may last up to two years. A Warning is subject to Commission review. See "Commission review."

WSCUC – See "WASC Senior College and University Commission."

WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) – a regional accrediting agency serving a diverse group of institutions throughout California, Hawaii and the Pacific as well as a limited number of institutions outside the U.S.

Withdrawl of accreditation – a WSCUC action taken when an institution is found to be seriously out of compliance with one or more Standards. Although not required, a decision to withdaw accreditation may be made after an Order to Show Cause or another sanction has been imposed and the institution has failed to come into compliance. An action to withdraw is subject to the WSCUC appeals process. If an institution closes following termination, it must comply with federal requirements and WSCUC policies r egarding teach-out arrangements.



Acknowledgements

Terms in this glossary related to accreditation and institutional review have been defined by WSCUC staff.

For terms related to assessment and educational effectiveness, WSCUC staff consulted glossaries created by California Lutheran University; California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo; California State University, Fresno; California State University, Los Angeles; Loyola Marymount University; and the University of Hawai'i, Manoa. These glossaries, in turn, were the products of many literature reviews and much campus experience. WSCUC is indebted to everyone who has contributed to defining and clarifying the language used to improve learning at all levels