Characteristics

in Higher Education

Characteristics of

EXCELLENCE

in Higher Education

Eligibility Requirements and Standards for Accreditation

Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Contents

Introduction

An institution of higher education is a community dedicated to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, to the study and clarification of values, and to the advancement of the society it serves. To support these goals, institutions of higher education within the Middle States region joined together in 1919 to form the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, a professional association devoted to educational improvement through accreditation. Today's successor organization for higher education accreditation is the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Accreditation is the means of self-regulation and peer review adopted by the educational community. The accrediting process is intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of higher education, making it worthy of public confidence and minimizing the scope of external control. The extent to which each educational institution accepts and fulfills the responsibilities inherent in the process is a measure of its concern for freedom and quality in higher education and its commitment to striving for and achieving excellence in its endeavors.

Middle States' accreditation is an expression of confidence in an institution's mission and goals, its performance, and its resources. Based upon the results of institutional review by peers and colleagues assigned by the Commission, accreditation attests to the judgment of the Commission on Higher Education that an institution has met the following criteria:

- that it has a mission appropriate to higher education;
- that it is guided by well-defined and appropriate goals, including goals for student learning;
- that it has established conditions and procedures under which its mission and goals can be realized;
- that it assesses both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, and uses the results for improvement;
- that it is accomplishing its mission and goals substantially;
- that it is organized, staffed, and supported so that it can be expected to continue to accomplish its mission and goals; and
- that it meets the eligibility requirements and standards of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

Membership in the Middle States Association follows a period of candidacy lasting up to five years. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education reviews institutions periodically through either on-site evaluation or other reports. Accreditation is continued only as a result of periodic reviews and evaluations through assessments of institutional achievements.

Characteristics of Excellence is designed as a guide for those institutions considering application for membership, those accepted as candidate institutions, and those accredited institutions engaged in self-review and peer evaluation. In their self-review processes, institutions demonstrate how they meet these accreditation standards within the context of their own institutional mission and goals. No assurance is given or implied that every accredited institution manifests these characteristics and meets these standards in equal proportion. Accredited institutions are expected to demonstrate these standards in substantial measure, to conduct their activities in a manner consistent with the standards, and to engage in ongoing processes of self-review and improvement.

Characteristics of Excellence 2002

Among the principles that guided the development of these standards, three are particularly noteworthy. First, these standards place an emphasis on institutional assessment and assessment of student learning. Second, the standards acknowledge the diversity of educational delivery systems that enable institutions to meet accreditation standards. And third, in order to achieve appropriate specificity, the standards are clearly defined and illustrated, including examples of evidence that could substantiate an institution's achievement of the standards.

The emphasis on institutional and student learning assessment follows naturally from the Commission's long-standing commitment to outcomes assessment, as evidenced historically through its publications, workshops, and training programs. Nonetheless, the Commission is aware of the institutional effort and cultural change that the relative emphasis on assessment may require.

The Commission on Higher Education acknowledges that in order to meet these stda

contained in Standard 13 are to be addressed only as they relate to individual

Optional Analysis and Evidence

Much of the evidence or analysis an institution will present to demonstrate that it meets the accreditation standards is clear and inherent within the Fundamental Elements themselves. Optional Analysis and Evidence, the final section of each standard, provides additional examples of documentation and analyses that might be carried out by an institution, relative to the particular accreditation standard.

Each institution will determine whether its self-study processes and report may be strengthened by incorporating some of these analyses and resources. The list is not comprehensive but is provided for use, as deemed appropriate, by the institution. It is not intended for independent utilization by the evaluation team, and institutions are not required to provide the information listed. Institutions should make reasonable choices regarding representative, useful sampling of evidence in any suggested category.

Relevant to each standard and its fundamental elements, institutions are encouraged to incorporate other types of assessment and analysis particular to their mission, goals, programs, and structures, including assessment documents prepared for other accrediting or regulatory agencies.

Interpreting and Applying the Standards

Judgment is important in applying *Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education.* Although the 2002 revision was formatted so that each Standard is followed by separate sections for "Context," "Fundamental Elements," and "Optional Analysis and Evidence," institutions and teams should remember to consider the spirit of the institution and the spirit of the accreditation standards as a whole, rather than applying these specific statements and "fundamental elements" piecemeal.

Institutions that elect the "selected topics" type of self-study demonstrate compliance with those standards or parts of standards not included in the Selected Topics self-study report through a separate review of documents prior to the team visit. Careful coordination is necessary to ensure that compliance is demonstrated either in the self study and visit, or in the documents reviewed in advance. (Please see Self-Study: Creating a Useful Process and Report for an explanation of the self-study models.)

If an institution has elected to organize its self-study process and report according to topics that it finds are most useful, rather than tracking the order of the accreditation standards, the team may choose to follow that organization in offering suggestions for improvement in the team report and may determine compliance with accreditation standards by using information diffused throughout the self-study document.

Whatever the type and organization of the self-study, compliance with each standard and with the standards as a whole will require interpretation by evaluators. For example:

1. Mission: Each standard should be interpreted and applied in the context of the institution's mission and situation.

2. Integrated Whole vs. Checklist: Evaluators must consider the totality created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists.

3. "Context" Sections: Not all parts of every statement in the Context sections will apply to every institution.

4. All Evidence: Information gathered during team visits may be used to supplement or contradict information included in the self-study.

5. Common Sense: Are the team's conclusions consistent with each other, with the self-study, and with information gathered during the visit? Does its report reflect understanding of this particular institution and its goals?

Standard 5: Administration

Standard 12: General Education

The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

Standard 13: Related Educational Activities

The institution's programs or activities that are characterized by particular content, focus, location, mode of delivery, or sponsorship meet appropriate standards.

Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible for Candidacy status, Initial Accreditation or Reaffirmation of Accreditation, an institution must demonstrate that it meets or continues to meet the following eligibility requirements of the Commission on Higher Education. (All terminology is used as defined within the accreditation standards.) Once eligibility is established, institutions then must demonstrate that they meet the standards for accreditation.

1. The institution is authorized to operate as an educational institution and award postsecondary degrees by an appropriate governmental organization within the Middle States region and other agencies as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates. Based on review of individual institutional requests, the Commission may determine that degree-granting authority from a U.S. or foreign governmental or other agency outside the Middle States region is an acceptable alternative.

2. For those seeking candidacy: The institution is operational with students actively pursuing its degree programs. For those seeking initial accreditation: catio

There is operational a conflict of interest policy for the governing body (and fiduciary body members, if such a body exists), which addresses matters such as remuneration, contractual relationships, employment, family, financial or other interests that could pose conflicts of interest, and that assures that those interests are disclosed and do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution.

9. The governing body is able to assure that the institution adheres to the eligibility requirements, describes itself in identical terms to all accrediting agencies, can be reasonably expected to adhere to accreditation standards and policies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and assures that the governing body and the institution make freely available to the Commission accurate, fair, and complete information on all aspects of the institution and its operations.

10. The institution has a chief executive officer who is appointed by the governing board, whose primary responsibility is to the institution, and who does not serve as the chair of the institution's governing body.

11. The institution has qualified administration and staff and provides the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

12. The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

13. The institution's faculty is sufficient in number, background and experience to support the programs offered and includes a core of faculty with sufficient responsibility to the institution to assure the continuity and coherence of the institution's programs. The institution provides a clear statement of faculty responsibilities including development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning.

14. The institution maintains physical facilities for administration, faculty, students, and programs and services that are appropriate for the institution's mission and educational programs offered.

15. The degree programs are congruent with the institution's mission; they gD((70au20.0c7b000 TD(54, b01T0.1

credentials of faculty and administrators, and other items relative to attending the institution and withdrawing from it.

19. The institution provides sufficient learning and info

Standards for Accreditation

Institutional Context

Standard 1

Mission and Goals

The institution's mission clearly defines its purpose within the context of higher education and indicates whom the institution serves and what it intends to accomplish. The institution's stated goals, consistent with the aspirations and expectations of higher education, clearly specify how the institu

> ➤ provide a framework for ongoing institutional development and self-evaluation.

Institutional goals are ideally expressed as outcomes: how the institution, its constituents and members, and the community it is committed to serving, will be different as a result of its initiatives and undertakings. Educational goals should be stated in terms of the outcomes they seek to achieve (e.g., the academic and personal changes and/or competencies the institution seeks to foster in its students). Institutional goals are also best expressed in observable terms to ensure that they are capable of being evaluated through institutional assessment (see Standard 7: Institutional Assessment). Goals should be sufficiently flexible for the institution to be able to respond to internal and external opportunities and changes, including emerging academic disciplines, changes within disciplines, and the use of new instructional methods and technologies.

As stated in Standard 2, the institutional objectives or strategies are activities, initiatives, or undertakings that institutions might conduct in order to achieve a goal. The Commission expects that institutions will define the goal (the broader end point), as well as the objectives or strategies (the path to achieve the goal).

While an institution is expected to aspire to excellence, it also is expected to operate within realistic goals reflective of its mission and its financial, human, and physical resources. Moreover, mission and goals are most effective when they are part of an institution-wide effort to improve and integrate the activities and operations of all elements and aspects of the institution. As an institution continually evaluates itself and improves, it should continue to review its mission and keep it current.

Fundamental Elements of Mission and Goals

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

> ➤ clearly defined mission and goals that:
>> ○ guide faculty, administration, staff and governing bodies in making decisions related to planning, resource allocation, program and curriculum development, and definition of program outcomes;
>> ○ include support of scholarly and creative activity, at levels and of the kinds appropriate to the institution's purposes and character;
>> ○ are developed through collaborative participation by those who facilitate or are otherwise responsible for institutional improvement and developments;
>> ○ are periodically evaluated and formally approved;
>> ○ are pub s5Ohostion.for   of in

➢ goals that focus on student learning, other outcomes, and institutional improvement.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

➢ evidence of written public statements to faculty, students, and other constituencies on the chief executive's vision for the institution;

➢ analysis of how institutional goals are applied at different levels within the institution and how the implementation of goals is coordinated;

➢ analysis of the processes used to develop goals and for the periodic review of mission and goals; or

➢ review of policies and processes used to disseminate mission and goals to new faculty, staff, students and members of the governing body and efforts intended to maintain awareness and commitment to that mission among continuing members of these groups.

Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

An institution conducts ongoing planning and resource allocation based on its mission and goals, develops objectives to achieve them, and utilizes the results of its assessment activities for institutional renewal. Implementation and subsequent evaluation of the success of the strategic plan and resource allocation support the development and change necessary to improve and to maintain institutional quality.

Context

The star

other plans, along with unit-level (campus, division, department, program, etc.) plans. All plans should be interrelated; if the enrollment plan, for example, calls for increased enrollment, the capital facilities master plan should ensure that institutional facilities can accommodate the increase in the student body. Academic planning often is facilitated by a process of academic program review, in which current academic programs are reviewed for their quality, demand, cost-effectiveness, and centrality to mission. The results of the review are then used to develop academic program plans.

As discussed under Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment), an effective planning process also includes assessment: a thorough review of relevant quantitative and qualitative information drawn from all segments of the institutional community. Its purposes are to determine if institutional and unit level mission and goals are being achieved, to understand why they have or have not been achieved, to evaluate whether institutional resources are being allocated and used in accordance with the priorities established by the institutional mission and goals, and to determine if the quality and quantity of resources allocated for the achievement of each institutional goal is appropriate. An assessment also is undertaken of the planning process itself to determine whether its purposes have been achieved.

As also discussed under Standard 7 (Institutional Assessment), the result of an effective planning process is institutional renewal. An assessment plan may thus be an important component of a collection of institutional plans both because it helps promote attention to the goals of the other plans and because the use of assessment results to inform the other plans ensures that disappointing outcomes are appropriately addressed. The Commission expects a thorough review of assessment information to lead to either confirmation of current goals, plans, and programs and services, or the appropriate modification of them to reflect the changing needs of the institution and its community. Institutional renewal involves the entire community and cannot be addressed in isolation.

Fundamental Elements of Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

> ➢ goals and objectives or strategies, both institution-wide and for individual units that are clearly stated, reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, are linked to mission and goal achievement, and are used for planning and resource allocation at the institutional and unit levels;

> ➢ planning and improvement processes that are clearly communicated, provide for constituent participation, and incorporate the use of assessment results;

> ➢ well defined decision-making processes and authority that facilitates planning and renewal;

- ➢ evidence of environmental scans and other processes in place for evaluating the economic, political, and social climate in which the institution operates and expects to operate;

- ➢ review of resource allocation procedures and their relationship to planning, mission, goals, and objectives [included also under Standard 3 Optional Analyses];

- ➢ assessment of the work of institutional committees, including the governing body, responsible for planning, assessment, and budget activities [Included also under Optional Analyses in Standard 3];

- ➢ review of external affiliations and partnerships and of their impact on the climate in which the institution operates;

- ➢ evidence of renewal strategies, rationales for changes made, and anticipated impact [Included also under Optional Analyses in Standard 7];

- ➢ assessment of resources utilized for institutional improvement;

- ➢ analysis of best practice models and benchmarks applied to improvement efforts; or

- ➢ evidence of quality improvement activities.

Institutional Resources

The human, financial, technical, facilities, and other resources necessary to achieve an institution's mission and goals are available and accessible. In the context of the institution's mission, the effective and efficient uses of the institution's resources are analyzed as part of ongoing outcomes assessment.

Context

The effective use of institutional resources, internal and external, is crucial to institutional performance. While for some institutions, a significant portion of available resources is generated and monitored at the system level, institutional management of resource acquisition and utilization significantly contributes to the effectiveness of planning, goals achievement, mission success, and institutional integrity. Institutional support resources including financial, facilities, equipment and supplies, technology, research and instructional support and staffing, and other assets should be an integral and proportional part of all institutional planning, allocation, and assessment activities.

The allocation of resources among programs, units, and individuals is an indicator of institutional priorities. Thus, the decision-making process for allocating assets should be connected to the institutional planning process; and the plan itself should provide a method for thoroughly reviewing, analyzing and monitoring all institutional support. Measures of efficiency and effectiveness, supported by quantitative and/or qualitative analyses related to mission and goals, may prove useful in the planning process. These measures may be among the significant types of information to be reported, at the system or institutional level as appropriate, in initial and continuing self-assessment and peer review for accreditation.

The efficient and effective use of institutional resources requires sound financial planning linked to institutional goals and strategies. These goals and strategies that support the institution's mission and require continual assessment of financial performance against the financial plan. The institution should demonstrate through an analysis of financial data and its financial plan that it has sufficient financial resources and a financial plan to carry out its mission and execute its plans, and if necessary, a realistic plan to implement corrective action to strengthen the institution financially within an acceptable time period.

Institutions should be prepared to provide financial data for the two most recently completed fiscal years and a financial plan covering at least two additional years. A typical financial plan will include a forecast of revenues, expenses, and investment income, and where available, a statement of financial position at the end of the fiscal year. For publicly traded institutions and their affiliates, this includes public filings.

Fundamental Elements of Institutional Resources

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

> - strategies to measure and assess the level of, and efficient utilization of, institutional resources required to support the institution's mission and goals;
>
> - rational and consistent policies and procedures in place to determine allocation of assets;
>
> - an allocation approach that ensures adequate faculty, staff, and administration to support the institution's mission and outcomes expectations;
>
> - a financial planning and budgeting process aligned with the institution's mission, goals, and plan that provides for an annual budget and multi-year budget projections, both institution-wide and among departments; utilizes planning and assessment documents; and addresses resource acquisition and allocation for the institution and any subsidiary, affiliated, or contracted educational organizations as well as for institutional systems as appropriate;
>
> - a comprehensive infrastructure or facilities master plan and facilities/infrastructure life-cycle management plan, as appropriate to

> ➢ periodic assessment of the effective and efficient use of institutional resources.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

> ➢ evidence of cooperative agreements for inter-institutional collaboration and resource sharing; analyses of any resulting efficiencies and impact on student achievement of academic goals;

> ➢ analysis of environmental scan data and other information the institution has gathered regarding its external environment, and the implications for developing linkages with other institutions, businesses, and other organizations rather than duplicating programs or services;

> ➢ evidence demonstrating the systemic approach that the institution utilizes to improve efficiency, contain costs, re-direct resources and develop new revenue streams to support the institution's mission and goals;

> ➢ review of institutional fund raising and grant activities;

> ➢ review of plans and policies for endowment management to ensure consistency with the institution's financial resources, goals, and objectives and summaries of endowment performance;

> ➢ review of financial statements for affiliated organizations;

> ➢ review of comprehensive institution resource acquisition, planning, assessment, and budget reports;

> ➢ assessment of the work of institutional committees, including the governing body, responsible for planning, assessment, and budget activities [Included also under Optional Analyses in Standard 2];

> ➢ review of resource allocation procedures and their relationship to planning, mission, goals, and objectives [Included also under Optireem

Leadership and

academic quality, fiscal and academic integrity, academic planning, assets, and financial health of the institution. It should review institutional assessment results and participate in institutional planning. However, it should not manage, micro manage, or interfere in the day-to-day operation of the institution. Always

While the general description of the role of the governing body applies best to a free-standing institution, many institutions have different governance structures tha

Fundamental Elements of Leadership and Governance

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- ➢ a well-defined system of collegial governance including written policies outlining governance responsibilities of administration and faculty and readily available to the campus community;

- ➢ written governing documents, such as a constitution, by-laws, enabling legislation, charter or other similar documents, that:

  - ○ delineate the governance structure and provide for collegial governance, and the structure's composition, duties and responsibilities. In proprietary, corporate and similar types of institutions, a separate document may establish the duties and responsibilities of the governing body as well as the selection process;

  - ○ assign authority and accountability for policy development and decision making, including a process for the involvement of appropriate institutional constituencies in policy development and decision making;

  - ○ provide for the selection process for governing body members;

- ➢ appropriate opportunity for student input regarding decisions that affect them;

- ➢ a governing body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest and of an appropriate size to fulfill all its responsibilities, and which includes members with sufficient expertise to assure that the body's fiduciary responsibilities can be fulfilled;

- ➢ a governing body not chaired by the chief executive officer;

- ➢ a governing body that certifies to the Commission that the institution is in compliance with the eligibility requirements, accreditation standards and policies of the Commission; describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting and regulatory agencies; communicates any changes in its accredited status; and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities, including levels of governing body compensation, if any;

- ➢ a conflict of interest policy for the governing body (and fiduciary body members, if such a body exists), which addresses matters such as remuneration, contractual relationships, employment, family, financial or other interests that could pose conflicts of interest, and that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution;

- ➢ a governing body that assists in generating resources needed to sustain and improve the institution;

> a process for orienting new members and providing continuing updates for current members of the governing body on the institution's mission, organization, and academic programs and objectives;

> a procedure in place for the periodic objective assessment of the governing body in meeting stated governing body objectives;

> a chief executive officer, appointed by the governing board, with primary responsibility to the institution; and

> periodic assessment of the effectiveness of institutional leadership and governance.

> Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution mayess or ccimbjnste ate

of curriculum, standards for admission and graduation, and personnel actions such as hiring, promotion, dismissal and tenure of faculty;

➢ evidence that there is student representation appropr

Administration

The institution's administrative structure and services facilitate learning and resear

Assignments of multiple functions to one individual or the assignment of administrative work (with or without compensation) to faculty members may be appropriate, but such practices should be reviewed periodically. Systematic procedures for evaluating administrative units and opportunities for the professional renewal of personnel should be established.

Administrators need close enough contact with current operations and faculty thinking to be effective in assisting the faculty and advancing the institution's goals and objectives. Administrators also need contact with students sufficient to understand their concerns and perspectives.

Fundamental Elements of Administration

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- ➢ a chief executive whose primary responsibility is to lead the institution toward the achievement of its goals and with responsibility for administration of the institution;

- ➢ a chief executive with the combination of academic background, professional training, and/or other qualities appropriate to an institution of higher education and the institution's mission;

- ➢ administrative leaders with appropriate skills, degrees and training to carry out their responsibilities and functions;

- ➢ qualified staffing appropriate to the goals, type, size, and complexity of the institution;

- ➢ adequate information and decision-making systems to support the work of administrative leaders;

- ➢ clear documentation of the lines of organization and authority; and

- ➢ periodic assessment of the effectiveness of administrative structures and services.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

- ➢ review of the sufficiency and effectiveness of directors, supervisors and administrators to carry out the functions of the institution;

- ➢ review of the adequacy of clerical, technological, and other support for administrative personnel;

ements abovructure(chno)5Ti74 0.0000 TD(d chath)Ti2523.7430 0.0000 Tr72.(e dire)Ti348.2160 589.472arlv(li an)Ti1.5574 Tw(ad

Integrity

In the conduct of its programs and activities involving the public and the constituencies it serves, the institution demonstrates adherence to ethical standards and its own stated policies, providing support for academic and intellectual freedom.

Context

Integrity is a central, indispensable and defining hallmark of effective higher education institutions, and it can manifest itself through the institution's conduct within each of the other standards. An institution may demonstrate integrity through the manner in which it specifies its goals, selects and retains its faculty, admits students, establishes curricula, determines programs of research, pursues its fields of service, demonstrates sensitivity to equity and diversity issues, allocates its resources, serves the public interest, and provides for the success of its students. Political interference in the affairs of an educational institution may threaten its freedom and effectiveness.

In all its activities, whether internal or external, an institution should keep its promises, honor its contracts and commitments, and represent itself truthfully. The same adherence to ethical standards and conduct should extend equally to all members of the institution, whether they are part of the institution through distance learning programs, subsidiaries, or other arrangements. Institutions should adhere to such integrity in all institutional settings, venues, and activities.

Academic freedom, intellectual freedom and freedom of expression are central to the academic enterprise. Thet.6342 0.0000 7.c0 TD(s, s)Tjsession are centrci.a970 vil.0000 T57(es9)Tj12.7434 0.000

To restrict the ava

faculty promotion, tenure, retention and compensation, administrative review, curricular improvement, and institutional governance and management;

evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

> ➢

Institutional Assessment

The institution has developed and implemented an assessment process that evaluates its overall effectiveness in achieving its mission and goals and its compliance with accreditation standards.

Context

Assessment may be characterized as the third element of a four-step planning-assessment cycle:

1. Developing clearly articulated written statements, expressed in observable terms, of key institutional and unit-level goals that are based on the involvement of the institutional community, as discussed under Standard 1 (Mission and Goals);

2. Designing intentional objectives or strategies to achieve those goals, as discussed under Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal);

3. Assessing achievement of those key goals; and

4. Using the results of those assessments to improve programs and services, as discussed under Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal), with appropriate links to the institution's ongoing planning and resource allocation processes.

The effectiveness of an institution rests upon the contribution that each of the institution's programs and services makes toward achieving the goals of the institution as a whole. This standard on institutional assessment thus builds upon all other accreditation standards, each of which includes periodic assessment of effectiveness as one of its fundamental elements. This standard ties together those assessments into an integrated whole to answe, R05iquesbu

The fundamental question asked in the accreditation process is, "Is the institution fulfilling its mission and achieving its goals?" This is precisely the question that assessment is designed to answer, making assessment essential to the accreditation process. Assessment processes help to ensure

visible, and convincing—evidence, rather than solely indirect evidence of student learning such as surveys and focus groups.

Planned assessment processes that purposefully correspond to institutional goals that they are intended to assess promote attention to those goals and ensure that disappointing outcomes are appropriately addressed. Institutions often have a variety of plans, such as a strategic plan, academic plan, financial plan, enrollment plan, capital facilities master plan, and technology plan. Just as such plans should be interrelated to ensure that they work synergistically to advance the institution, assessments should also be interrelated. At many institutions, effective institutional planning begins with academic planning, which in turn drives the other plans. If the academic plan calls for a new academic program, for example, the technology plan should ensure faculty and students in the new program will be able to use appropriate instructional technologies. Assessments of the technology plan should evaluate not just whether instructional technologies have been put in place but also how effectively those technologies have helped students to achieve the program's key learning outcomes.

Organized, systematized, and sustained assessment processes are ongoing, not once-and-done. There should be clear interrelationships among institutional goals, program- and unit-level goals, and course-level goals. Assessments should relate clearly to important goals, and improvements should clearly stem from assessment results.

As noted earlier, because student learning is a fundamental component of the mission of most institutions of higher education, the assessment of student learning is an essential component of the assessment of institutional effectiveness. An institution may therefore create institutional effectiveness documentation that includes a component on assessing student learning (see Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning), or it may create a bridge between two separate sets of documentation, one for the assessment of student learning and one for other aspects of institutional effectiveness.

A commitment to the assessment of institutional effectiveness requires a parallel commitment to ensuring its use. Assessment information, derived in a manner appropriate to the institution and to its desired outcomes, should be available to and used by those who develop institutional goals and carry out strategies to achieve them. As discussed under Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal), an accredited institution uses the results of assessment for institutional renewal: to maintain, support, and improve its programs and services. Assessment information should be used as a basis for assessing the institution's effectiveness in achieving its stated goals, for monitoring and improving the environment for student learning, and for enhancing overall student success; to these ends, it should be linked to the institution's ongoing planning and resource allocation processes.

Assessment results also should be used to evaluate the assessment process itself, leading to modifications that improve its relevance and effectiveness.

Fundamental Elements of Institutional Assessment

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- ➢ documented, organized, and sustained assessment process to evaluate and improve the total range of programs and services; achievement of institutional mission, goals, and plans; and compliance with accreditation standards that meets the following criteria:
    - ○ a foundation in the institution's mission and clearly articulated institutional, unit-level, and program-level goals that encompass all programs, services, and initiatives and are appropriately integrated with one another (see Standards 1: Mission and Goals and 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal);
    - ○ systematic, sustained, and thorough use of multiple qualitative and/or quantitative measures that:
        - • maximize the use of existing data and information;
        - • clearly and purposefully relate to the goals they are assessing;
        - • are of sufficient quality that results can be used with confidence to inform decisions;
    - ○ support and collaboration of faculty and administration;
    - ○ clear realistic guidelines and a timetable, supported by appropriate investment of institutional resources;
    - ○ sufficient simplicity, practicality, detail, and ownership to be sustainable;
    - ○ periodic evaluation of the effectiveness and comprehensiveness of the institution's assessment process;
- ➢ evidence that assessment results are shared and discussed with appropriate constituents and used in institutional planning, resource allocation, and renewal (see Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal) to improve and gain efficiencies in programs, services and processes, including activities specific to the institution's mission (e.g., service, outreach, research); and
- ➢ written institutional (strategic) plan(s) that reflect(s) consideration of assessment results.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant insti

- inform appropriate constituents about the institution and its programs;
- evidence of renewal strategies, made in response to assessment results [includ

➢ evidence of the utilization of information appropriate to the review of

Student Support Services

The institution provides student support services reasonably necessary to enable each student to achieve the institution's goals for students.

Context

The support of students toward their educational goals usually requires a well-organized and appropriate program of student services, complemented by good staff leadership and broad-based institutional commitment. Within the scope of the institutional mission, student services can reinforce and extend the college's influence beyond the classroom. These services promote the comprehensive development of the student, and they become an integral part of the educational process, helping to strengthen learning outcomes. Appropriate and comparable student services should support the learning of all students in the context of the institution's mission and chosen educational delivery system. Similarly, the institution should clearly convey to students their roles and responsibilities as partners in the educational process. The quality of campus life often contributes significantly to student learning; therefore, institutions, and particularly those with residential populations, should be attentive to a wide range of student life issues, including mental health and safety.

Framed by the institution's mission, services should be responsive to the full spectrum of diverse student needs, abilities, and cultures. Dependent upon institutional mission, support services may include but are not limited to admissions, financial aid, registration, orientation, advising, counseling, tutoring, discipline, health, housing, placement, student organizations and activities, cultural programming, child care, security, and athletic activities.

Delivery of student support services should be flexible in nature and should vary depending on the modes and levels of educational delivery. Consistent with institutional mission, programs should deho

Fundamental Elements of Student Support Services

An accredited institution is ex

- ➢ evidence of a structure appropriate to the delivery of student support services (organizational chart);
- ➢ review of student handbooks, catalogs, newspapers, and schedules, including materials showing availability and explaining the nature of services (published in print and/o

Faculty

The institution's instructional, research, and service programs are devised, developed, monitored, and supported by qualified professionals.

Context

Teaching and learning are central to the activities of faculty members at each institution, and faculty bear primary responsibility for promoting, facilitating, assuring, and evaluating student learning. The faculty and other qualified professionals are responsible for devising and developing an institution's academic, professional, research, and service programs within the framework of its educational mission and goals. They are committed to all aspects of students' success.

Within some institutions, functions previously assumed to be a part of traditional faculty roles are now the responsibility of other qualified professionals. A professional is qualified by virtue of education, training, experience or appropriate skills. Designated professional qualifications should be consistent with the expected academic outcome, reflecting both appropriate standards of quality and the institutional mission. Whenever used in these standards, the term "faculty" shall be broadly construed to encompass qualified professionals such as third parties contracted by the institution, part-time or adjunct faculty, and those assigned responsibilities in academic development and delivery. Such professionals may include, as well, those responsible for the institution's academic information resources.

There should be an adequate core of faculty and other qualified professionals that is responsible to the institution, supports the programs offered, and assures the continuity and coherence of the institution's programs. Faculty selection processes should give appropriate consideration to the value of faculty diversity, consistent with institutional mission. Faculty participation in institutional planning, curriculum review, and other governance roles can be an appropriate recognition of their professional competence and commitment, where consistent

and delivery of programs and services. Encouragement for faculty research, as well as for professional advancement and development, are characteristics of enlightened institutional policies.

For institutions relying on part-time, adjunct, temporary, or other faculty on time-limited contracts, employment policies and practices should be as carefully developed and communicated as those for full-time faculty. The greater the dependence on such employees, the greater is the institutional responsibility to provide orientation, oversight, evaluation, professional development, and opportunities for integration into the life of the institution.

The existence of collective bargaining agreements is an institutional matter or, as in the case of some public institutions, a matter of public policy. Although the Middle States Commission on Higher Education takes no position with respect to a decision to bargain collectively, all affected constituents should be attentive to the impact of bargaining on students and their needs, on professional relationships and responsibilities, and on educational effectiveness.

Fundamental Elements of Faculty

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- ➢ faculty and other professionals appropriately prepared and qualified for the positions they hold, with roles and responsibilities clearly defined, and sufficiently numerous to fulfill those roles appropriately;

- ➢ educational curricula designed, maintained, and updated by faculty and other professionals who are academically prepared and qualified;

- ➢ faculty and other professionals, including teaching assistants, who demonstrate excellence in teaching and other activities, and who demonstrate continued professional growth;

- ➢ appropriate institutional support for the advancement and development of faculty, including teaching, research, scholarship, and service;

- ➢ recognition of appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, student learning, research, and service;

- ➢ published and implemented standards and procedures for all faculty and other professionals, for actions such as appointment, promotion, tenure, grievance, discipline and dismissal, based on principles of fairness with due regard for the rights of all persons;

- ➢ carefully articulated, equitable, and implemented procedures and criteria for reviewing all individuals who have responsibility for the educational program of the institution;

- ➢ criteria for the appointment, supervision, and review of teaching effectiveness for part-time, adjunct, and other faculty consistent with those for full-time faculty;

- ➢ adherence to principles of academic freedom, within the context of institutional mission; and

➢ assessment of policies and procedures to ensure the use of qualified professionals to support the institution's programs.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence i

Standard 11

Educational Offerings

The institution's educati

Effective educational offerings thus begin with expected learning outcomes: statements, expressed in observable terms, of the knowledge, skills, and competencies that students are expected to exhibit upon successful completion of a course, academic program, co-curricular program, general education requirement, or other specific set of experiences. Effective statements of student learning outcomes are developed with the involvement of the institution's community and their review of existing learning goals. Just as educational curricula are designed, maintained, and updated by faculty and other professionals who are academically prepared and qualified, as discussed under Standard 10 (Faculty), faculty should be influential in the substantive determination of key learning outcomes at all levels: institutional, program, and course.al lea   e(rposefu)TET77649 0.0000 TD(rol m)Tj081482 0.0000 TD(e ae(i)Tj267 0.0000 TD(x(pones)Tj3

Institutional-level learning outcomes stem from the institution's mission and are often embodied in the learning outcomes of the general education curriculum, although an institution may have institutional learning outcomes that students achieve in other ways. A college may, for example, have learning goals that are achieved through a community service requirement for all students, a religious institution may require participation in religious activities, or an art school may have institutional learning goals common to all its academic programs. It is essential, however, to ensure that all students, regardless of their particular course of study, have adequate, progressive opportunities to achieve institutional-level learning outcomes.

Appropriate interrelationships among institutional, program-level, and course-level learning outcomes should be evident. For example, a course required within a program should help students achieve at least one of the program's key learning outcomes and should have stated course-level learning outcomes to this effect. Some learning outcomes may be repeated across courses or programs, and some institutional or program level learning outcomes may be syntheses of multiple course level learning outcomes.

Students learn more effectively when they understand the key learning outcomes of their program, course, and institution, how they are expected to achieve those learning goals (i.e., through what assignments and learning experiences), and how they are expected to demonstrate their learning. Statements of expected student learning at the institutional, program, and course levels should be available to current and prospective students (see Standard 8: Student Admissions). Course-level expected student learning outcomes should be included in course syllabi. Statements of expected student learning also should be available to those planning and implementing assessment activities and to those evaluating programs and the institution (see Standards 7: Institutional Assessment and 14: Assessment of Student Learning).

The second step in the process of developing educational offerings is using statements of expected student learning to create a coherent, purposeful program of study, not simply a collection of courses, that leads to those desired outcomes. As noted under Standard 10 (498 0.00g0.09 rgcj25.9075 0.0trn(es078(rticipat)TD7y), fac)Tj29.39e0.0000

sufficient content, rigor and depth to be characterized as collegiate or graduate level learning, as appropriate, with a clear distinction between pre-college and college level study, and between undergraduate and graduate study;

clear linkages between the design of specific courses, programs, and learning activities and the articulated goals of the specific programs of which they are part and to the overarching mission of the institution; and

responsiveness to new research findings and modes of inquiry.

Several skills, collectively referred to as "information literacy," apply to all disciplines in an institution's curricula. These skills relate to a student's competency in acquiring and processing information in the search for understanding, whether that information is sought in or through the facilities of a library, through practica, as a result of field experiments, by communications with experts in professional communities, or by other means. Therefore, information literacy is an essential component of any educational program at the graduate or undergraduate levels.

These skills include the ability to:
- determine the nature and extent of needed information;
- access information effectively and efficiently;
- evaluate critically the sources and content of information;
- incorporate selected information in the learner's knowledge base and value system;
- use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose;
- understand the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information and information technology; and
- observe laws, regulations, and institutional policies related to the access and use of information.

Closely tied to information literacy is the need for technological competency at all levels within an institution and its curricula. Higher education has new information sources and technologies that supplement its print-based knowledge resources and present new challenges for teachers and learners who must learn how to develop and use general or discipline-specific technologies to identify, retrieve, and apply relevant information. Therefore, institutions should provide both students and instructors with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to use the information, new technology, and media for their studies, teaching, or research. As information technologies emerge, institutions may offer periodic updating or retraining.

In addition to information literacy and technological competency, the institution's curricula should be designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency (see Standard 12: General Education). While these skills are often addressed within a general education curriculum, they must often be further addressed within degree or certificate programs so that students may become proficient in these skills as they are applied within a particular field of study.

Effective educational offerings are predicated upon the availability and accessibility of adequate learning resources, such as library and information technology support services, staffed by professionals who are qualified by education, training, and experience to support relevant academic activities.

While there should be coherence within any program of study, there also should be coherence between an institution's curricular offerings and the other experiences that contribute to the total educational environment and promote the development of life skills. The mission of the institution and the characteristics of its students determine the appropriateness of co-curricular activities, which may include out-of-class lectures and exhibitions, study abroad, civic involvement, independent learning and research, opportunities for informal student-faculty contact and other student activities (see Standard 9: Student Support Services). These experiences foster the personal and social development of students in areas such as personal aspirations, integrity and responsibility, self-awareness and self-reliance, awareness of values, interpersonal relationships, and leadership. An institution may integrate community services with educational programs, enhancing the effectiveness with which it fulfills both its educational mission and its responsibility to society.

Recognition of college-level learning from other institutions may facilitate a student's progress without compromising an institution's integrity or the quality of its degrees. An institution's articulation and transfer policies and procedures should provide appropriate consideration, consistent with good educational practice, for the individual student who has changed institutions or objectives. In such policies, the institution should judge courses, programs, degrees and other learning experiences, not on their modes of delivery, but on their learning outcomes and the existence of valid evaluation measures, including third-party expert review.

Increasingly, higher education institutions are serving adult learners, a population whose learning needs are different from those of traditional full-time or residential students. As noted under Standard 9 (Student Support Services), institutions with a focus on adult learning need to demonstrate flexibility and sensitivity by developing institutional policies and practices that are appropriate to and supportive of adult learners.

Fundamental Elements of Educational Offerings

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities. These elements also apply to all other educational activities addressed within Standard 13.

> ➢ educational offerings congruent with its mission, which include appropriate areas of academic study of sufficient content, breadth and length, and conducted at leve   opucat   te to a

- program goals that are stated in terms of student learning outcomes;

- periodic evaluation of the effectiveness of any curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experiences that the institution provides its students and utilization of evaluation results as a basis for improving its student development program and for enabling students to understand their own educational progress (see Standards 9: Student Support Services and 14: Assessment of Student Learning);

- learning resources, facilities, instructional equipment, library services, and professional library staff adequate to support the institution's educational programs;

- collaboration among professional library staff, faculty, and administrators in fostering information literacy and technological competency skills across the curriculum;

- programs that promote student use of a variety of information and learning resources;

- provision of comparable quality of teaching/instruction, academic rigor, and educational effectiveness of the institution's courses and programs regardless of the location or delivery mode;

- published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit. The consideration of transfer credit or recognition of degrees will not be determined exclusively on the basis of the accreditation of the sending institution or the mode of delivery but, rather, will consider course equivalencies, including expected learning outcomes, with those of the receiving institution's curricula and standards. Such criteria will be fair, consistently applied, and publicly communicated;

- policies and procedures to assure that the educational expectations, rigor, and student learning within any accelerated degree program are comparable to those that characterize more traditional program formats;

- consistent with the institution's educational programs and student cohorts, practices and policies that reflect the needs of adult learners;

- course syllabi that incorporate expected learning outcomes; and

- assessment of student learning and program outcomes relative to the goals and objectives of the undergraduate programs and the use of the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness (see Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning).

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate thr293 0.005use of the

Additional Elements for Graduate and Professional Education

➢ graduate curricula providing for the development of research and independent thinking that studies at the advanced level presuppose;

➢ faculty with credentials appropriate to the graduate curricula; and

➢ assessment of student learning and program outcomes relative to the goals and objectives of the graduate programs (including professional and clinical skills, professional examinations and professional placement where applicable) and the use of the results to improve student learning and program effectiveness (see Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning).

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

➢ evidence of completed analytical program reviews (of educational offerings) that address topics such as the following:

  ○ appropriateness to institutional mission;

  ○ relevance to student goals, interests and aspirations;

  ○ clarity of educational goals and related strategies for assessing student achievement of those goals;

  ○ provision of adequate time on task and information to learn and to practice the knowledge, skills and abilities imparted by each program;

  ○ provision of adequate balance between theory and practice, given programmatic and institutional goals;

  ○ opportunity to integrate instructional and non-instructional experiences;

  ○ opportunity for active student engagement in the learning undertaken;

  ○ opportunity to practice and improve upon skills associated with the field or area studied;

  ○ opportunity for collaborative learning and to work with others in the completion of learning tasks;

  ○ provision of an atmosphere of inquiry where diverse backgrounds and perspectives are valued

- ➢ evidence of student understanding of the key learning goals of their program, courses, and institution, how they are expected to achieve those learning goals (i.e., through what assignments and learning experiences), and how they are expected to demonstrate their learning;

- ➢ review of results from the institution's implemented outcomes assessment plan (see Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning);

- ➢ evidence of local and remote information resources, access structures, and technologies adequate to support the curriculum;

- ➢ evidence of information literacy incorporated into the curriculum with syllabi, or other material appropriate to the mode of teaching and learning, describing expectations for students' demonstration of information literacy skills;

- ➢ evidence of accessible reference tools to ascertain where relevant materials exist and are located;

- ➢ assessment of information literacy outcomes, including assessment of related learner abilities;

- ➢ evidence of trained instructional and reference staff, or other support services, available on-site or via remote access, to help students and teaching staff locate and evaluate information tools and resources;

- ➢ evidence of an adequate policy and process, tailored to the mission and goals of the institution, for the development and management of information resources;

- ➢ analysis of transfer trends and patterns, both to and from the institution;

- ➢ review of articulation agreements and analysis of their impact and effectiveness; or

- ➢ review of the impact of transfer agreements or transfer acceptance mandates on the coherence and integrity of the institution's degree programs

Additional Optional Analysis and Evidence for Graduate and Professional Education

Similarly for graduate and professional education:

- ➢ evidence of graduate and professional program goals and objectives that are well-defined, coherent, reflective of in

General Education

The institutituti

skills and knowledge derived from general education and the major should be integrated because general education and study in depth, together, comprise a quality undergraduate education.

Institutions offering the associate and baccalaureate degrees will strike an appropriate balance between specialized and more general knowledge. The institution's ability to demonstrate that its students are able to integrate and apply in different contexts the core knowledge and skills learned in their course work is a critical component of successful undergraduate educational programs.

General education offerings should reflect the particular programs and mission of the institution. However, general education courses should not focus narrowly on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. The content of general education within specialized degree programs should be comparable, though not necessarily identical, to traditional academic offerings at the collegiate level or above. Programs in postsecondary vocational technical institutions should evidence recognition of the relationship between broad education and the acquisition of techniques and skills. In professional degree programs beyond the baccalaureate, courses in ethics, humanities, and public policy may be particularly relevant.

Fundamental Elements of General Education

An accredited institution offering undergraduate degrees and some graduate institutions are expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- ➢ a program of general education of sufficient scope to enhance students' intellectual growth, and equivalent to at least 15 semester hours for associate degree programs and 30 semester hours for baccalaureate programs; (An institution also may demonstrate how an alternative approach fulfills the intent of this fundamental element.)

- ➢ a program of general education where the skills and abilities developed in general education are applied in the major or concentration;

- ➢ consistent with institutional mission, a program of general education that incorporates study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives;

- ➢ institutional requirements assuring that, upon degree completion, students are proficient in oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, and technological competency appropriate to the discipline;

- ➢ general education requirements clearly and accurately described in official publications of the institution; and

- ➢ assessment of general education outcomes within the institution's overall plan for assessing student learning, and evidence that such assessment results are utilized for curricular improvement.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

➢ evidence of institutional statements of the rationale supporting the curriculum and the benefits of a quality general education program; and evidence that this rationale has been communicated to students, parents, advisors, employers, and other constituencies;

➢ analysis of statements of institutional mission, goals, or objectives relative to core knowledge and skills (general education);

➢ analysis of statements of individual curricular or degree program goals/objectives relative to core knowledge and skills (general education);

➢ evidence of articulated expectations of student learning outcomes for written communication, speech communication, quantitative reasoning, scientific reasoning, information literacy, technological competence, and critical analysis and reasoning for all undergraduate degree students;

➢ evidence of student understanding of the key learning outcomes of each general education requirement;

➢ evidence of institutional support for the general education program (administrative structure, budget, faculty incentives); or

➢ evidence of completed analytical review of the general education curriculum that addresses topics such as:

   ○ appropriateness to institutional mission;

   ○ relevance to student goals, interests and aspirations;

   ○ provision of adequate time on task and information to learn and to practice the knowledge, skills and abilities

- opportunity for collaborative learning and to work with others in the completion of learning tasks; or

- provision of an atmosphere of inquiry where diverse backgrounds and perspectives are valued.

- ➢ program learning goals consistent with national criteria, as appropriate;

- ➢ available and effective student support services; and

- ➢ if courses completed within a certificate program are applicable to a degree program offered by the institution, academic oversight assures the comparability and appropriate transferability of such courses.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

- ➢ evidence of articulated student knowledge, skills, and competency levels;

- ➢ evidence of the involvement of faculty and other qualified academic professionals in the design, delivery, and ongoing evaluation of certificate programs;

- ➢ review of stated rationale, where processes for program oversight and quality assurance are different or separate from the institution's regular processes;

- ➢ analysis of availability and effectiveness of appropriate student support services; or

- ➢ analysis of the impact of certificate programs on the institution's resources (human, fiscal, physical, etc.) and its ability to fulfill its institutional mission and goals.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning generally refers to knowledge or skills obtained outside of a higher education institution. Recognition of college-level experiential learning, which is derived from work, structured internships, or other life experience, may facilitate a student's progress without compromising an institution's integrity or the quality of its degrees. An institution's policies and procedures should provide appropriate consideration, consistent with good educational practice, for the individual student who has gained college level learning from other sources. However, procedures to assess learning for the award of academic credit (especially where such credit is part of an accelerated degree program) should define college-level learning and state clearly that credit is awarded for demonstrated learning, and not merely for experience.

Fundamental Elements of Experiential Learning

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

➢ credit awarded for experiential learning that is supported by evidence in the form of an evaluation of the level, quality and quantity of that learning;

➢ published and implemented policies and procedures defining the methods by which prior learning can be evaluated and the level and amount of credit available by evaluation;

➢ published and implemented policies and procedures regarding the award of credit for prior learning that define the acceptance of such credit based on the institution's curricula and standards;

➢ published and implemented procedures regarding the recording of evaluated prior learning by the awarding institution;

➢ credit awarded appropriate to the subject and the degree context into which it is accepted; and

➢ evaluators of experiential learning who are knowledgeable about the subject matter and about the institution's criteria for the granting of college credit.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

➢ analysis of the amount and type of evaluated learning credit awarded by discipline;

➢ analysis of the reports prepared by evaluators including the methods of assessing the learning and the information or competencies considered;

➢ review of standards utilized by evaluators in assessing college level learning;

➢ analysis of student portfolios or other means used to demonstrate college level learning;

➢ analysis of consistency in the award of college credit for experiential learning across the institution;

➢ analysis of consistency in the award of college credit for experiential learning in particular disciplines;

➢ evidence of training and development of those who evaluated experiential learning for college credit; or

➢ review of the acceptance in transfer of the awarding institution's evaluated experiential learning credit.

Non-credit Offerings

Non-credit offerings may be offered on-site and through distance learning modalities. To the extent that non-credit offerings are an important part of an institution's activities, they should be consistent with its mission and goals. Whether these offerings are internally or externally developed, appropriately qualified professionals with responsibility to the institution should have oversight for the design, delivery, and evaluation of such offerings. If non-credit courses are potentially applica

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

> ➤ evidence of the rationale for non-credit offering

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

➢ review of detailed information on all sites/locations, including initial date of operation, programs offered, student profile, faculty profile, administrative profile, physical and technological resicle,

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

➢ review of institutional support for faculty participation in the design, development, and delivery of academic offerings at a distance;

➢ analysis of partnerships with other institutions to offer or accept offerings at a distance, to assure consistency with the institution's general policies regarding such partnerships or consortia and to assure the integrity of the degree-granting institution;

➢ evidence that students have appropriate hardware and the technology skills and competencies needed to suc

Contractual Relationships
And Affiliated P

➢ adequate and appropriate accredited institutional review and approval of work performed by a contracted party in such functional areas as admissions criteria, appointment of faculty, content of courses/programs, instructional support resources (including library/information resources), evaluation of student work, and outcomes assessment.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

➢ review of documentation of the expressed purposes, roles, and scope of operation for the affiliated entity, including whether the entity offers its own separate courses, programs, or degrees in its own name;

➢ evidence of the extent to which the affiliated entity is separate from or part of the accredited institution, including relevant factors such as faculty, other personnel, processes, ownership, management, and governance;

➢ evidence of published public information that clearly and accurately represents the contractual relationship between the institution and the other entity;

➢ evidence of provision of appropriate protection for enrolled students in the event a contract is terminated or renegotiated;

➢ review of student profile, including whether students of the affiliated entity are considered to be students of the accredited institution or are eligible for financial aid;

➢ analysis of the involvement of the institution's own faculty and other qualified academic professionals in the development and

oversight to assure the comparability and appropriate transferability of such courses; or

➢ analysis of the impact of the contractual arrangement on the institution's resources (human, fiscal, physical, etc.) and its ability to fulfill its institutional mission and goals.

Assessment of Student Learning

Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution's students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.

Context

Assessment of student learning may be characterized as the third element of a four-step teaching-learning-assessment cycle:

1. Developing clearly articulated written statements, expressed in observable terms, of key learning outcomes: the knowledge, skills, and competencies that students are expected to exhibit upon successful completion of a course, academic program, co-curricular program, general education requirement, or other specific set of experiences, as discussed under Standard 11 (Educational Offerings);

2. Designing courses, programs, and experiences that provide intentional opportunities for students to achieve those learning outcomes, again as discussed under Standard 11;

3. Assessing student achievement of those key learning outcomes; and

4. Using the results of those assessments to improve teaching and learning.

This standard on assessment of student learning builds upon Standards 11 (Educational Offerings), 12 (General Education), and 13 (Related Educational Offerings), each of which includes assessment of student learning among its fundamental elements. This standard ties together those assessments into an integrated whole to answer the question, "Are our students learning what we want them to learn?" Self-studies can thus document compliance with Standard 14 by summarizing the assessments of Standards 11 through 13 into conclusions about overall achievement of the institution's key student learning outcomes.

Because student learning is at the heart of the mission of most institutions of higher education, the assessment of student learning is an essential component of the assessment of institutional effectiveness (see Standard 7: Institutional Assessment), which additionally monitors the environment provided for teaching and learning and the achievement of other aspects of the institution's mission, vision, and strategic goals and plans.

The fundamental question asked in the accreditation process is, "Is the institution fulfilling its mission and achieving its goals?" This is precisely the question that assessment is designed to answer, making assessment essential to the accreditation process. Assessment processes help to ensure the following:

- Institutional and program-level goals are clear to the public, students, faculty, and staff;
- Institutional programs and resources are organized and coordinated to achieve institutional and program-level goals;
- The institution is providing academic opportunities of quality;
- The institution is indeed achieving its mission and goals; and
- Assessment results help the institution to improve student learning and otherwise advance the institution.

Assessment is not an event but a process that is an integral part of the life of the institution, and an institution should be able to provide evidence that the assessment of student learning outcomes and use of results is an ongoing institutional activity. While some of the impact of an institution on its students may not be easily or immediately measured—some institutions, for example, aim for students to develop lifelong habits that may not be fully developed for many years—the overall assessment of student learning is expected whatever the nature of the institution, its mission, the types of programs it offers, or the manner in which its educational programs are delivered and student learning facilitated.

While the Commission expects institutions to assess student learning, it does not prescribe a specific approach or methodology. The institution is responsible for determining its expected learning outcomes and strategies for achieving them at each level (institutional, program, and course), assessment approaches and methodologies, sequence, and time frame. These may vary, based on the mission, goals, organization, and resources of the institution. Whatever the approach, effective assessment processes are useful, cost-effective, reasonably accurate and truthful, carefully planned, and or

The improvement of overall educational quality and the enhancement of effective teaching and learning is most likely to occur when faculty and administrators work together to implement a sound, institution-wide program of assessment. Because the faculty guide decisions about curriculum and pedagogy, the effective assessment of student learning is similarly guided by the faculty and supported by the administrati-wide

- ➤ analysis of the use of student learning assessment findings to:
    - ○ assist students in improving their learning;
    - ○ improve pedagogies, curricula and instructional activities;
    - ○ review and revise academic programs and support services;
    - ○ plan, conduct, and support professional development activities;
    - ○ assist in planning and budgeting for the provision of academic programs and services;
    - ○ support other institutional assessment efforts (see Standard 7: Institutional Assessment) and decisions about strategic goals, plans, and resource allocation; and
    - ○ inform appropriate constituents about the institution and its programs;
- ➤ analysis of evidence that improvements in teaching, curricula, and support made in response to assessment results have had the desired effect in improving teaching, learning, and the success of other activities;
- ➤ analysis of the institutional culture for assessing student learning, including:
    - ○ the views of faculty and institutional leaders on assessment;
    - ○ faculty members' understanding of their roles in assessing student learning;
    - ○ the quality and usefulness of institutional support for student learning assessment efforts;
    - ○ campus-wide efforts to encourage, recognize, and value efforts to assess student learning and to improve curricula and teaching;
    - ○ evidence of collaboration in the development of statements of expectations and standards for learning and in designing and implementing assessments;
- ➤ evidence that information appropriate to the review of student retention, persistence, and attrition, is used to reflect whether these are consistent with student and institutional expectations [also included in41.295o02a[378.5057 T6 68.r0

Middle States
Commission on Higher Education
Mission Statement

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is a voluntary, non-governmental, membership association that defines, maintains, and promotes educational excellence across institutions with diverse missions, student populations, and resources. The Commission is dedicated to quality assurance and improvement through accreditation via peer evaluation. Middle States accreditation instills public confidence in institutional mission, goals, performance, and resources through its rigorous accreditation standards and their enforcement.

Middle States Publications

Various docu

Index

A

j   E T   p o l . administration 20 r 3 c t u a l c o m 2 3 3   0 . 0 0 0 0   T D   (i n g   s t u d) T j   3 6

See also transfer 2 7 2 . 0 l 0 s 0 o 6 c t a d e s 5 5 9 . 6 7 2 2   T D   0 o m 6 5 t

F

G

S