Regional Accreditation of Higher Education

Accreditor Perspectives on the New Designs for Assuring Quality in Higher Education
Types of Accreditation

- PROFESSIONAL
- SPECIALIZED
- NATIONAL
- REGIONAL (or Institutional)

- HLC (North Central)
- NEASC (New England)
- MSA (Middle States)
- SACS (Southern)
- WASC (ACSCU, AACJC-Western)
- NWCCU (Northwest)

3,500 Regionally Accredited Institutions
Coordinating Groups
Institutional Accreditors

- NWCCU
- SACS
- WASC
- HLC - North Central
- MSA
- NEASC
- SACS
Central Premises

- Mission and membership based
- Dual goals: quality assurance & quality improvement
- Voluntary (provided through private, 3rd-party agencies) and non-governmental
Central Premises

- Self-regulation, member-defined standards
- Robust practice of institutional self-evaluation and peer review
- Responsive and responsible to diversity of institutions, of missions, of students
What is Quality?

Focus on Quality

excellence in leadership!
excellence in innovation!
excellence in management!

@hush

excellence in excellence!!
Who Gets to Define It?
Has the entire backdrop changed?
Has the entire backdrop changed?
National Goals
Global Context
Emerging Accountability Systems...

- Student Success
- Student Engagement
- Student Performance (learning)
NEW Questions

- Are you doing as well for your students as the place down the road?
- What and how well are your students learning in comparison to peer institutions?
- In what ways do you inform the public about what students learn and how well?
What does a degree testify to?

How do we know when good enough is good enough?

Who sets the standards? The process? The measures? Who defines quality?

Is it the appropriate learning? Appropriate for what? For whom?
Quality (assessment, accreditation),
Productivity (accountability, completion),
Transparency (openness, information)

...a matter of improving?
...a matter of proving?
...a matter of disclosing?
What will, can, must we say about learning to the public?
Impact on Accreditors

- Deal with strategic issues and bureaucratic details
- Shift from vouching for institution to verifying specifics more distant from academic core
- Expectation for consumer protection and watchdog capacity
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
The ACCJC and WASC

- WASC is a corporate entity with three divisions.
- ACCJC is one of three accrediting commissions that comprise WASC. Others are:
  - The Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities (ACSCU), and
  - The Accrediting Commission for Schools (ACS).
- ACCJC/WASC operates in the Western Region: California, Hawaii, Palau, Guam, CNMI, FSM, the Marshall Islands, and American Samoa.
The ACCJC’s Standards

- The ACCJC, with other all regional accreditors, periodically upgrades accreditation standards
- All now require institutions to define intended student learning outcomes and assess learning
- Colleges are required to provide evidence that they meet standards and achieve their educational missions
- Institutions must demonstrate they have in place processes for continuous quality improvement
Emphases Have Changed

- In previous decades, accrediting bodies focused a good deal of attention on institutional resources and processes, and took it for granted that good things resulted from good process.

*Practices have changed*

- Accreditors now also ask institutions to determine and evaluate results and outcomes, to discuss those widely within the college, and to show the results to accreditors and, in some cases, the public.
2012-14 Review of Standards

- Current Standards were implemented in **2002**
- Since then changes have occurred in the institutional environment as well as public expectations
- Commission has contracted Dr. Peter Ewell, VP at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS)
Peter Ewell Issues:

- New Patterns of Student Participation
- New Kinds of Providers
- A Transformed and Contingent Faculty
- New Approaches to Teaching and Learning
- Constrained Resources
- A Global Higher Education System
Commission Hearings:

- March 24, 2012 – Southern California, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Huntington Beach
- June 6, 2012 – Northern California, SFO Marriott Hotel, Burlingame, 9:00 am
- September 2012 – Hawaii and Pacific Islands, Date and Site TBD
Commission Schedule:

- Draft Standards - 2013
- Commission first reading of draft Standards – January 2014
- Commission second reading for adoption of revised Standards – June 2014
ACCJC/WASC
10 Commercial Blvd, Suite 204
Novato, CA  94949
415-506-0234
Fax: 415-506-0238

Website: www.accjc.org
Overview:
NWCCU Standards and Process
The standards form a flexible framework of qualitative, catalytic, non-prescriptive statements that enables institutions with divergent missions, philosophies, and characteristics to exhibit essential principles of quality and effectiveness.
• The new accreditation model and standards were implemented in 2011

• The new model is mission centric and outcomes based
• Changed from ten year cycle to a seven year cycle

• Goal: Enable institutions to oversee their own performance and make refinements and changes to what they are doing to fulfill their mission
The new model is aimed at creating a more collaborative, ongoing relationship with the Commission.
A core theme is a manifestation of a fundamental aspect of institutional mission with overarching objectives that guide planning for contributing programs and services, development of capacity, application of resources to accomplish those objectives, and assessment of achievements of those objectives. Collectively, the core themes represent the institution’s interpretation of its mission and translation of that interpretation into practice.
Revised Standards

Standard One:
Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Standard Two:
Resources and Capacity

Standard Three:
Planning and Implementation

Standard Four:
Effectiveness and Improvement

Standard Five:
Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability
1st Year of New Cycle

Institution submits Yr 1 Report to address Standard One

- Establishes standard for all subsequent reports/evaluations
- No visit for Year One Report – panel makes confidential recommendation
Year Three of New Cycle

Institution expands on Yr 1 Report to include response to Standard Two

• Response to Standard Two

• Updates response to Standard One

• A committee of evaluators conducts onsite visit to evaluate institution with regards to Standards one and two
Year Five of New Cycle

Institution expands on Yr 3 Report to include response to Standards Three and Four

• Reviews and updates response to Standard One, Two, Three & Four

• There is no visit associated with Year Five Report – panel of evaluators will review with respect to Standards Three and Four
Institution expands on Yr 5 Report to include response to Standard Five

• Reviews as necessary response to Standard One, Two, Three & Four

• Committee of outside evaluators conducts onsite visit to evaluate with regard to Standards Three, Four, and Five
Recursion

First year following completion of 7-year cycle, the institution begins the cycle anew

- Completion of Year One Report
- Response to Standard Five from prior year
Standard One:
Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Examines institutional purpose and intentions based on a clear statement of institutional mission, articulation of mission fulfillment, and identification of mission core themes complete with objectives and assessable indicators of achievement of those objectives.
# Analysis and Synthesis Embedded in the Accreditation Standards

## Standard One: Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations
**Explication of Mission, Core Themes, Objectives, and Achievement Indicators**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 1</th>
<th>Theme 2</th>
<th>Theme 3</th>
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## Standard Three: Planning and Implementation
**Institutional and Core Theme Planning to Apply Resources and Capacity**

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- Governance
- Human Resources
- Education Resources
- Student Support Resources
- Library and Information Resources
- Financial Resources
- Physical and Technical Infrastructure

## Standard Four: Effectiveness and Improvement
**Assess Achievement in Core Themes with Results Used for Improvement**

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## Standard Five: Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability
**Evaluate Mission Fulfillment; Evaluate Adaptability to Change**
**Determine Confidence for Future Relevance, Success, and Viability**

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Evaluation of Mission Fulfillment (5.A)

- Expression of Mission Fulfillment (1.A.2)
- Acceptable Extent of Mission Fulfillment (1.A.2)
- Mission Statement (1.A.1)
- Achievement of Core Theme 1 Objectives (4.A.1)
- Achievement of Core Theme N Objectives (4.A.1)
Comments and Questions
PATHWAYS
One Accreditation
Multiple Pathways to Reaffirmation
New Criteria

- Strong emphasis on transparency, integrity, ethical & responsible conduct
- Increased emphasis on continually improving student learning
- Increased emphasis on educational and institutional performance & excellence
- New expectations for retention, persistence, and completion
Multiple Pathways

Greater Value to Institutions

ACCREDITATION

Greater Credibility to the Public
Pathways for Reaffirmation of Accreditation

- AQIP Pathway
- Standard Pathway
- Open Pathway
Seven-year accrediting cycle

Three sub-cycles:

- **Action Cycle**: Projects every year
- **Strategic Cycle**: Systems Portfolio & Appraisal every 4 years
- **Reaffirmation Cycle**: Quality Checkup Visit & Panel Reaffirmation every 7 years

Does not use Assurance System (technology) at this point
Cycles of Systematic Quality Improvement
Standard Pathway

Quality Assurance

ACCREDITATION

Quality Improvement
Standard Pathway

- Ten-year accrediting cycle
- Required for all institutions in first ten-year period of accreditation
- Open to all institutions
- Serves as Pathway for institutions not eligible for Open or AQIP Pathways
- Uses Assurance System (technology)
Open Pathway

Quality Initiative

Assurance Process

Quality Assurance

Quality Improvement
Open Pathway

- Ten-year accrediting cycle
- Assurance Review (at distance) in Year 4; Comprehensive Evaluation in Year 10
- Improvement separated from Assurance; i.e. “opens the Pathway” for focus on QI
- Monitoring need reduced (no focused visits)
- Uses Assurance System (technology)
Assurance System

- Evidence File (uploaded materials)
- Assurance Argument (the narrative)
- Additional Materials (depending on process)
- Peer Review Process
Assurance System

- Web-based system
- Secure access for institutional representatives (3 “official” plus 12 more), peer reviewers, HLC staff
- Maintained over entire timeline of HLC affiliation
- HLC’s Assurance System is “all that is required” unless institution chooses other systems to help it organize materials, manage a process, etc.
1. Institution uploads documents; tags to Criteria, Core Components, Subcomponents, Federal Compliance requirements.

2. All evidence must be tagged or it is dropped from system; evidence accumulated over time.
3. A few full documents required as uploads or links (audits, handbooks, rosters, budgets, etc.).

4. An area to upload new documents during the evaluation if requested or needed.
5. Provides brief but thorough analysis of evidence and addresses required improvement areas.

6. Makes case institution meets Criteria & complies with federal requirements.

7. Links to selected materials in Evidence File.
8. Institutional Update information, public comments received.

9. Previous accreditation documents (team reports, appraisals, official communications).
Assurance Argument

- 35,000 word limit (40,000 for Standard Pathway)
- Links to uploaded evidence
- Organized by Criteria and Core Components; highly structured format
- Assurance Argument concept replaces the Self-Study model
Assurance Argument

For each criterion, institution offers:

- Criterion **introduction**

- **An articulation** of how each Core Component within each Criterion is met: 
  * (how and why met, improvement, constraints, threats to maintain, opportunities, future plans)*

- **Links** to evidence in materials in Evidence File

- A **Criterion Summary**
One Accreditation

Multiple Pathways to Reaffirmation
Multiple Accrediting Processes

- PEAQ: Program to Evaluate and Advance Quality (phases out in 2015)
- AQIP Pathway: Academy Quality Improvement Program (remains as is)
- Open Pathway
- Standard Pathway
- Non-pathway processes (candidacy, sanction, show-cause, change of control, etc.)