

WASC Standards
Addressing Core Commitments to
Institutional Capacity and
Educational Effectiveness

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

- Institutional Purpose
- Integrity

The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational objectives aligned with its purposes and character. It has a clear and conscious sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in the higher education community, and its relationship to society at large. Through its purposes and educational objectives, the institution dedicates itself to higher learning, and the dissemination of knowledge. The institution functions with integrity and autonomy.

Questions for Institutional Engagement (Institutional Purposes)

1. To what extent are institutional purposes broadly understood by members of the institutional community and communicated clearly and consistently to external constituencies?
2. How does the institution ensure that its institutional purposes and educational objectives are regularly reviewed and modified?
3. To what extent has the institution developed and begun to use indicators and sources of evidence to determine whether its educational objectives have been achieved?
4. In what ways does the institution ensure that its educational objectives are actively used as guides for decision-making, resource allocation, and action?
5. How does the institution ensure that its educational objectives and experiences are appropriate for its students, given their particular backgrounds and their intended objectives?

Questions for Institutional Engagement (Integrity)

1. In what ways does the institution assure itself that it promotes and upholds sound ethical practices and respect for humanity through its teaching, scholarship, and service, as well as its administrative practices?
2. To what extent are policies regarding academic freedom widely understood and to what extent do they support a climate of academic inquiry and engagement for all members of the institutional community?
3. How does the institution ensure that issues of diversity are appropriately engaged and that a climate of respect for a diversity of backgrounds, ideas and perspectives is fostered among its members?
4. How does the institution assure that student grievances and complaints are addressed promptly, appropriately, and equitably?
5. How does the institution assure itself that it has adequate administrative controls in financial, administrative and auxiliary functions (including budgeting, fundraising, athletics, student support services), and external relations with business, government, and foundations? How effective are conflict of interest policies?

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

- Teaching and Learning
- Scholarship and Creative Activity
- Support for Student Learning

The institution achieves its institutional purposes and attains its educational objectives through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning. It demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively and that they support one another in the institution's efforts to attain educational effectiveness.

Questions for Institutional Engagement (Teaching and Learning)

1. In what ways does the institution ensure that the degrees it offers remain rigorous and aligned with its core purposes?
2. How does the institution ensure that its programs can be completed in a timely manner, are configured to meet student needs, and lead to retention and graduation rates appropriate to the type of institution and student population?
3. To what extent does the institution provide an environment that is actively conducive to study and learning, where library, information resources, and co-curricular programs actively support student learning?
4. How does the institution connect its curriculum and services to its defined communities, through such initiatives as development of available field settings, service learning, or similar opportunities for practical engagement?
5. How effectively does the institution review and modify its courses and programs to reflect new knowledge and changes in the needs of society?
6. In what ways does the institution encourage and disseminate innovations in teaching and learning, and discuss their implications for curriculum and pedagogy?
7. How does the institution's leadership create and sustain an institutional climate that actively fosters effective teaching and learning?
8. To what extent does the institution ensure that students develop expected core learning abilities and competencies before they graduate?

Questions for Institutional Engagement (Scholarship and Creative Activity)

1. In what ways does the institution's policies and administrative procedures encourage and support scholarship, instructional innovation and creative activity (e.g., policies on faculty workload and reward, research, funding, professional development programs, etc.) as well as learning about pedagogy and learning theory?
2. To what extent are scholarship, research, and creative activity linked to the improvement of teaching and learning?
3. How effectively does the institution engage students directly in scholarship and creative activity, consonant with the institution's purpose and character?
4. In what ways does the institution seek to foster among its students a research-oriented culture of inquiry—especially at the graduate level—that is consonant with its character and purposes?

Questions for Institutional Engagement (Support for Student Learning)

1. How effectively has advising or mentoring helped students benefit from available educational opportunities and resources?
2. How does the institution ensure that the organization and delivery of its services to students is appropriately aligned with its educational objectives and its particular approach to teaching and learning?
3. In what ways does the institution promote and provide an intellectually rich campus environment in which students are encouraged to explore and express a diversity of ideas and opinions?
4. How does the institution identify the special needs of transfer students, assess their performance and retention in the institution, and determine that institutional educational objectives are met even if coursework is taken in other institutions? How does it similarly take steps to ensure that its credits are transferable to other institutions?
5. To what extent does the institution regularly collect and analyze retention and attrition data for the student body as a whole as well as for major subgroups (such as by age, ethnicity, or gender), and explore the implications of the data to be assured that the institution is being responsive to the needs of all of its students?
6. In what ways does the institution gather, analyze, and use information about the needs and preferences of students and the values they place on programs and services? Is this information effectively used to create an overall climate conducive to student and institutional learning?

Standard 3: Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Sustainability

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

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

Questions for Institutional Engagement (Faculty and Staff)

1. How effectively do the institution's workload policies and practices balance appropriate expectations for faculty scholarship and creative activity, teaching assignments, and other uses of faculty time?
2. In what ways does the institution ensure that part-time faculty are oriented, supported, and integrated appropriately into the academic life of the institution?
3. How does the institution ensure that its recruits, supports, and continues to develop its non-academic staff in a manner that encourages their effectiveness and actively furthers institutional purposes?

Questions for Institutional Engagement (Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources)

1. How effectively does the institution demonstrate that it is able to maintain fiscal and physical equilibrium through its array of fiscal policies and strategies and through the regular appraisal and

- renewal of its physical assets? In what ways does an institution align its fiscal, physical, and human resources to fulfill its mission, priorities, and educational objectives?
2. How does the institution ensure that its learning environment and any associated physical facilities are safe and accessible?
 3. How does the institution assess the continuing adequacy of its fiscal, physical, and information resources and plan for the future to ensure that they are appropriately renewed and (if necessary) altered in size and character?
 4. In what ways does the institution engage its faculty and other members of its community in the process of determining and deploying its fiscal, physical, and information assets?
 5. How does the institution ensure that its members develop the critical information literacy skills needed to locate, evaluate, and responsibly use information? How does it utilize the special skills of information professionals to support teaching, learning, and information technology planning?
 6. To what extent do the institution's resources, services, and information technology respond to faculty needs with respect to scholarly activity and curricular development?

Questions for Institutional Engagement (Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes)

1. In what ways does the institution ensure that its organizational structures and decision processes remain appropriately aligned with its size, complexity, character, institutional purposes, and service to students?
2. How does the institution ensure that its established organizational structures and decision-making processes are being followed and respected? How does it evaluate the effectiveness of these processes and ensure that the resulting information is used to improve them?
3. How does the institution assure continuity of leadership through its processes for selecting and evaluating its chief executive and other top administrators? How does it ensure that its leadership remains credible and communicates effectively with members of the institution's community?
4. How does the institution encourage and support the active exercise of leadership and responsibility at all levels—including supporting faculty to discharge their distinctive leadership roles?
5. How does the institution interpret and put into practice shared governance through appropriate faculty participation in planning and decision-making in pursuit of the institution's purpose and character?
6. How does the institution define the role of students in campus decision-making and how is that role exercised?

Standard 4: Creating an Organization Committed to Learning and Improvement

- Strategic Thinking and Planning
- Commitment to Learning and Improvement

The institution conducts sustained, evidence-based, and participatory discussions about how effectively it is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its educational objectives. These activities inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness. The results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities at different levels of the institution, and to revise institutional purposes, structures, and approaches to teaching, learning, and scholarly work.

Questions for Institutional Engagement (Strategic Thinking and Planning)

1. How effectively does planning and evaluation occur within the institution at multiple levels and across units? To what extent do planning efforts lead to priorities and clear intuitional implementation activities?
2. How well do planning, evaluation, and institutional research activities fit together, and to what extent are they aligned with the intuitions' purposes and character?
3. How does the institution ensure that the information it collects and maintains about itself is current, accurate, and of the right kinds? How effectively does it assess its capacity to analyze this information and use the results of such assessments for improvements?

Questions for Institutional Engagement (Commitment to Learning and Improvement)

1. How are stakeholders involved in the assessment of the effectiveness of educational programs? How is their feedback disseminated and used to inform improvement?
2. In what ways does the institution review the effectiveness of its quality assurance processes to assure its alignment with institutional priorities and educational objectives?
3. To what extent does the institution explore assumptions that shape the design and organization of its educational objectives and programs, and generate new approaches to teaching and learning?
4. In what ways does the institution identify effective approaches to assessing teaching and learning within the institution and at other institutions? How does it incorporate these practices to increase the institutional capacity to engage issues of educational effectiveness?
5. To what extent does the institution have a collective vision of educational attainment that is clearly stated and widely understood?
6. In what ways does the institution reinforce a culture of evidence throughout the organization?