



**Academic
Quality Improvement
Project**

The Higher Learning Commission **NCA**

The AQIP Quality Criteria

Participation in the Academic Quality Improvement Project encourages your higher education institution to use the Criteria to examine systematically how it is increasing its effectiveness in educating its students and accomplishing its other key purposes, and how it is managing and improving the many other processes that allow it to pursue these primary goals. The Criteria allow quality-driven colleges and universities to look at themselves as interrelated processes bound together by a common mission. Each Criterion examines a group of processes, an institutional sub-system, to help uncover opportunities for growth and improvement.

An institution participating in AQIP will regularly use the Criteria as the framework for a Strategy Forum, in which it works with peers from other institutions to craft a plan and statement of its quality improvement targets and activities over the next 3-5 years. At the end of this period, it will use the Criteria as the basis for a comprehensive Institutional Quality Review. AQIP will provide the institution with feedback that evaluates its progress and helps it focus on its next cycle of improvement. Using these same Criteria, the institution will also share with AQIP, in an Annual Results Inventory, its improvement activities, and its progress on key performance indicators that it selects to measure the achievement of its most important goals. In this way, an institution can track its overall progress on its journey toward continuous improvement, identify those particular processes and systems where its immediate opportunities for improvement are greatest, and highlight institution-wide themes that deserve closer attention.

In short, an institution can become more "quality-driven" by using the AQIP Criteria to examine its operations from a systematic perspective — while simultaneously providing the pattern of evidence NCA needs to continue the institution's accreditation.

The Quality Criteria Framework

AQIP's Quality Criteria are mission-focused and holistic. They provide the framework supporting improvement within an institution whose mission focuses on learning, the common purpose of all higher education. In order to advance this core mission objective, the Criteria take a systemic view, defining and evaluating all of the processes within an institution as they relate to learning. Consequently *quality* refers to the continuous improvement of processes in support of mission. The journey toward *quality* never ends.

The framework illustrates how the nine Quality Criteria relate to each other.

On the left, ***Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs*** forms the basis for accountability



and drives everything that occurs in an institution by determining the requirements, expectations, and preferences of the students and other stakeholders, external and internal.

In the center, **Valuing People, Leading and Communicating, Supporting Institutional Operations, Planning Continuous Improvement,** and **Building Collaborative Relationships** designate the major systems and activities by which an institution achieves what its students and other stakeholders require.

On the right, **Helping Students Learn** highlights the core processes contributing to student learning, an educational institution's primary purpose and achievement. **Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives** provides for diversity in the character of higher education institutions by encompassing processes that institutions use to pursue additional major goals. Together, these processes represent an institution's reasons for existence.

Underlying everything, **Measuring Effectiveness** sustains other institutional processes by effectively collecting, storing, retrieving and interpreting the information needed to improve the entire system.

Using the Criteria. Each of the Quality Criteria deals with a related group of processes, and allows an institution to analyze, understand, and explore opportunities for improving these processes.

Questions to Help you study your Institution using the Quality Criteria

AQIP has developed a series of non-prescriptive questions that you should find useful in analyzing your institution's systems and processes and their results; the Institutional Quality Review will ultimately incorporate these questions. Each Criterion is followed by a list of these questions, which ask an institution to examine its systems and processes in order to assess their strength and to find ways to improve them and the results they produce.

Ultimately, AQIP is interested in the answers to each question for *the institution as a whole*—as are you, your colleagues, and your institution. However, the questions are also tools institutions can use at various levels—departmental, divisional, academic unit. It may be that any given question would be answered differently for a particular unit than it would for the institution as a whole. Thus the questions may serve as tools to discover whether good approaches have been developed and deployed throughout the organization, or to identify where there are gaps or internal differences in perception of the organization's progress in a particular area. Thus, in each question, **you** may be interpreted to refer to **your institution** as a whole, **your department**, etc. In using the questions, an institution must make clear how it wants individuals, teams, or groups to interpret **you**.

The questions also use **you** to underscore the responsibility the people who operate an institution hold, individually and collectively, for the systems and processes by which it operates. It may be that many of the processes have been inherited, so sanctified by tradition that current personnel have the impression that no alternative is possible. But the truth is that even the most hallowed traditions continue because the current faculty, staff, and administrators choose—explicitly, or by inattention—to continue them. The constant use of **you** helps to remind users of these questions that the operation of their organization is in their hands.

Questions are of four types:



Overview. Overview descriptions provide a higher level view of how your institution views each of the Criteria, allow your institution to describe how each fit together in a systems approach, and give context to the remaining questions pertaining to processes, results, and improvement.



Process analysis. Process analysis questions take the Overview description to your institution's operational level. These analyze the processes and systems that address the Criterion in question and address how your institution approaches these processes/systems. For example, process analysis questions might address how you determine your processes or systems; how they function and are deployed throughout your institution; what strategy lies behind their design and how they are aligned with one another and with other elements of the AQIP Quality Criteria; what the processes' or systems' actual products or goals are; what resources are required and used; who is involved, in what manner, and to what frequency; and how your institution maintains its processes/systems.



Assessment and results. Assessment and results questions address the specific measures your institution uses to assess performance in this Criterion element, what results are being realized (including comparative results, where appropriate), what your institution's performance targets are, and how these results and targets are communicated throughout your institution. These questions ask you to evaluate how effectively your systems, processes, and their results serve your students' and other stakeholders' needs.



Systematic improvement. Systematic improvement questions address how your institution continuously learns from its experience, uses information about your processes' performance results to improve your approach, and improves its processes and systems to achieve better results.

Organizational Areas to consider under each Quality Criterion. After each Criterion appears a list of organizational areas that an institution might consider in examining the Criterion. These intentionally redundant catalogs are intended neither as checklists nor as exhaustive inventories of every activity, operation, or service to be found in higher education institutions. Often the same item appears under more than one Criterion, suggesting either that a particular activity might be viewed as contributing to multiple processes or that an institution's mission may determine how it views certain activities. These lists are provided to clarify understanding of the core group of related systems and processes each Criterion covers. As an institution identifies the collection of systems and processes it groups under each Criterion, it may decide that some of the items suggested are inappropriate, given its particular mission and organization, or that others not listed should be included.

AQIP welcomes suggestions for improving these lists. Proposed changes which will make the lists more useful for institutions analyzing themselves from a process perspective should be emailed to AQIP@ncacihe.org (with the subject "Activity by Criteria Lists") or mailed to AQIP, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, 30 North LaSalle Street, Suite 2400, Chicago, IL 60602-2504.

1. *Helping Students Learn* identifies the shared purpose of all higher education organizations, and is accordingly the pivot of any institutional quality analysis. It examines an institution's systems and processes for:

- developing new academic programs, reviewing, reshaping, and reinvigorating current ones, and phasing out programs no longer viable, effective, desirable, or necessary
- delivering instruction and encouraging and promoting academic and other forms of student development, in and out of the classroom
- strengthening educational effectiveness, assessment, and evaluation
- measuring, analyzing, observing, tracking, recording, and grading student academic achievement, in individual courses, in degree programs, and in co-curricular contexts for institutional improvement
- developing, staffing, delivering, supporting, scheduling, evaluating, ordering, retiring, and revising credit courses, continuing education and special instructional activities
- recruiting and admitting students, developing, implementing, and evaluating educational student support and development services, student registration and record-keeping
- establishing, articulating, publicizing, encouraging, maintaining, and reviewing targets for student development performance (learning, behaviors, values, activities, etc.), including residence life, student activities, advising, counseling, etc.

***Helping Students Learn* invites an institution to analyze and improve how it:**

- manages crucial factors in the teaching-learning process, including
 - the establishment of learning goals and expectations for students
 - curriculum and program design focused on learning
 - teaching and educational delivery
 - research on teaching and learning
 - student co-curricular development and achievement
- designs, implements, operates, manages, and improves its academic, learner, and co-curricular support processes, services, and activities, making certain that the process and results data it collects drive continuous improvement
- uses its knowledge of student needs and educational markets to develop responsive academic programming and other innovations

- incorporates new technologies and new formats into educational design and delivery
- measures levels and trends in its students' academic achievement, relative to comparable colleges and universities, to assure that its academic processes and practices are achieving the results the institution desires
- fosters and maintains a climate of intellectual inquiry, curiosity, and reflection, and respects originality, creativity, and intellectual property
- welcomes diverse ideas and the people that profess or hold them
- celebrates and protects intellectual freedom, and measures and improves the processes that preserve the core academic values that characterize U.S. higher education.

Questions to Help you study your Institution using this Criterion
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1. *Helping Students Learn*

A) Description/Overview

- i) Describe the common student learning objectives you hold for all of your students (regardless of their status or particular program of study) and the pattern of knowledge and skills you expect your students to possess upon completion of their general and specialized studies.
- ii) Describe how you align student learning expectations and practices with your mission.
- iii) Describe your institutional philosophy on pedagogy, student preparation, and learning support.
- iv) Describe your approach to assessing student learning and academic achievement.

B) Process

- i) How do you determine your common student learning objectives as well as specific program learning objectives? Who is involved in setting these objectives?
- ii) How do you design new programs and courses to facilitate student learning? Why, when, and how do you conduct program and course reviews that might result in adding, changing, or deleting programs and courses?
- iii) How do you create and maintain a climate that celebrates intellectual inquiry, reflection, respect for intellectual property and respect for differing and diverse opinions?
- iv) How do you determine the preparation required of students for the specific curricula, programs, courses, and learning they will pursue?
- v) How do you communicate expectations regarding student preparation and student learning objectives to prospective and current students? How are students informed of the knowledge and skills base required for the awarding of specific degrees or credentials?
- vi) How do you help students select programs of study that match their needs, interests and abilities? How are discrepancies between the necessary and actual preparation of students and their learning styles detected and addressed? How does your institution address underprepared learners?
- vii) How do you determine and document effective teaching and learning? How are these expectations communicated across the institution? How are improvements made in instruction? How do you monitor the currency and effectiveness of your curriculum? How is the curriculum monitored and delivered in terms of scheduling courses conducive to students' needs and with regard to efficiency (i.e., faculty time and energy, use of technology, use of facilities, overall costs vs. benefits)?
- viii) How do you assess how well students learn what is expected of them? How do you determine students have acquired the knowledge and skills base required by the institution and its stakeholders for the awarding of specific degrees or credentials?
- ix) How do you discover how well prepared students completing programs, degrees, and certificates are for further education or employment?

C) Outcomes

- i) What specific quantitative and qualitative measures does your institution use to indicate success in helping students learn?
- ii) Demonstrate the specific results your institution has achieved in helping students learn and in providing value to students. What historical trends or patterns are evident? How do your results compare with the results of other higher education institutions and, if appropriate, organizations outside of the education community?
- iii) How do you set targets for improving your student learning results? What are your specific targets for improvement?
- iv) How do you communicate your results and improvement targets to students, faculty, staff, and administrators and appropriate stakeholders?

D) Process Improvement

- i) How do you ensure the systematic improvement of the processes by which you design programs and courses, the processes by which you establish and communicate learning expectations to students, the processes by which you assess your students' learning achievements, and other critical teaching and learning processes?

Notes to Criterion 1

Criterion 4, *Valuing People*, examines how you ensure that your reward and recognition systems are aligned with your teaching and learning objectives.

Criterion 6, *Supporting Institutional Operations*, examines how do you determine, address and improve your learning support systems to contribute to achieving student learning objectives.

Organizational Areas to Consider under this Criterion

Academic advising	International study and global awareness programs
Academic program planning	International/study abroad programs
Academic standards	Internship, co-operative, and practicum programs
Admission policies and practices	Joint high school-college programs
Adult learning strategies	Library and learning resources
Assessment programs	Non-traditional learning strategies
Classroom design	Off-campus academic programs
Classrooms, laboratories, and studios	Orientation policies and practices
Clinical programs	Pedagogical design
Commuter student services	Peer tutoring and mentoring programs
Contact hours policies and practices	Personal counseling
Continuing education	Placement and job performance
Correspondence programs	Probation and dismissal
Course and program delivery systems	Program and curriculum review
Course scheduling	Program development and approval procedures
Curriculum committees	Religious life
Distance education programs	Remedial and developmental programs
Distance or external learning programs	Residence life
Diversity programs	Service learning programs
Field-based learning	Services for disabled students
Grading policies and practices	Spiritual development
Graduation policies	Student government
Honors programs	Student life
Independent study	Student retention and attrition programs
Instructional design	Teaching and learning centers
Instructional technology	Teaching evaluation

Tech-prep programs
Tests, licensure, certification

Textbook selection
Withdrawal policies and practices

2. *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives* addresses the processes that contribute to the achievement of an institution’s major objectives that complement student learning and fulfill other portions of the institution’s mission. It examines an institution’s systems and processes for:

- achieving central and important purposes other than cognitive and affective student learning

***Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives* invites an institution, depending on its distinctive character, to analyze and improve how it:**

- promotes scholarly research and creative activity
- grows or expands the institution
- increases endowment or stockholder equity
- stimulates and contributes to the community’s economy
- maintains integrity in college athletics and other auxiliary or secondary activities
- creates “intellectual capital” that makes the institution a “learning organization”
- works to achieve other goals not directly focused on student learning
- uses these data on its distinctive objectives to encourage, support, reward, evaluate, and improve the processes by which it pursues them
- embodies in its systems effective design, evaluation, and continuous improvement while focusing on high performance
- ensures that its auxiliary goals support rather than interfere with Helping Students Learn

<p>Questions to Help you study your Institution using this Criterion</p>

2. *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives*

A) Description/Overview

- i) What are your explicit institutional objectives in addition to *Helping Students Learn* (Criterion 1)?
- ii) How are these other distinctive objectives aligned with your mission and vision?
- iii) How do your other distinctive objectives support or complement your processes and systems for *Helping Students Learn*?
- iv) How do your other distinctive objectives strengthen your overall organization? How do they enhance your relationship with the community(s) and region(s) you serve?

B) Process

- i) How are your other distinctive objectives determined?
- ii) How are these objectives assessed and reviewed?
- iii) Who is involved and how is their feedback incorporated in the decision-making process?

C) Outcomes

- i) What specific measures (quantitative and qualitative) do you use to indicate success in accomplishing your other distinctive objectives?

- ii) Demonstrate the specific results you have achieved in pursuing your other distinctive objectives. How do they compare with the results of peer institutions? How do they compare with other higher education institutions and organizations outside of the education community?
- iii) How do you set specific targets for improvement for your other distinctive objectives? What are your improvement targets?
- iv) How are these results and improvement targets communicated to all employees as well as affected students and stakeholders?

D) Process Improvement

- i) How do you use assessment and review findings to make improvements in the processes that support your other distinctive objectives?

Notes to Criterion 2

Other Distinctive Objectives may include pure and applied research, service learning, service to a religious order or philosophy, economic stimulation and development of the community, economic stimulation and development of the community, growth in organizational capital, or any other major activities to which the institution commits substantial resources, energy, and attention. These objectives are *distinctive* because they distinguish your institution's unique identity, while **Helping Students Learn** is objective you share with all other higher education institutions.

Criterion 4, **Valuing People**, examines the ways you make certain your reward and recognition systems are aligned with your distinctive objectives.

Organizational Areas to Consider under this Criterion
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accumulated learning or knowledge capital Athletic programs Auxiliary enterprises Business incubators Campus Radio and Television operations Capital campaigns Capital growth Co-curricular activities Community enrichment programs Contracted training and licensure Economic development efforts Endowment Faculty, scholarship and research/publishing Fund-raising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants and grant management Institutional learning Institutional research Performance and other creative activities Research and technology transfer Research parks Research, pure or applied Shareholder dividends and equity growth Special initiatives (<i>e.g., lead responsibilities for a community, regional, or national consortium or grant</i>) Sponsored programs Stockholder equity
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3. *Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs* examines how a quality-driven institution, knowing it will ultimately be judged by all of those external or internal individuals and groups that have a major stake in the institution's success, works actively to understand their needs. It examines an institution's systems and processes for:

- gathering, analyzing, and using information about the needs, preferences, and requirements of students and other stakeholders; the value they place on institutional services and activities; and the basis they use for judging institutional performance
- establishing, articulating, publicizing, maintaining, and reviewing targets for student performance (learning, behaviors, values, activities, etc.)
- maintaining useful relationships with students, former students, and other stakeholders
- communicating to the public

- ❑ forming and using advisory committees

***Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs* invites an institution to analyze and improve how it:**

- determines the requirements, expectations, and preferences of its students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders
- uses this information to understand stakeholders' current needs, to anticipate their future needs, and to create an overall climate conducive to learning for all
- identifies and involves its stakeholders in its mission, vision, planning, and evaluation systems
- builds relationships with its stakeholders
- determines and enhances stakeholders' satisfaction with its activities and results in order to improve current educational services and support planning

Questions to Help you study your Institution using this Criterion

3. *Understanding Students' and other Stakeholders' Needs*

A) Description/Overview

- i) Describe how you define, differentiate, and analyze your student and other stakeholder groups?
- ii) Who are your major stakeholders, and what are their short- and long-term requirements and expectations? How have you identified these needs?
- iii) Describe your system for handling complaints and for communicating back to dissatisfied students and other stakeholders. Explain your system for learning from their complaints which of your processes and services might be improved.

B) Process

- i) How do you build and maintain a relationship with your stakeholders? On what is the relationship based? How do you follow-up with students and other stakeholders after they have interacted with you (e.g., received instruction or service)?
- ii) How do you provide stakeholders with easy access to information or services?

C) Outcomes

- i) How do you determine your stakeholders' satisfaction with your performance? What data or information do you use to know you are meeting your stakeholders' needs? How do you determine satisfaction relative to your competitors and to other similar organizations?
- ii) How do you involve your stakeholders in envisioning and preparing for your future? What feedback do you give them on their contribution?
- iii) How effectively are you satisfying your students' and stakeholders' needs, requirements, and preferences? What measures do you use? How do your results in these areas compare with those of other higher learning providers?

D) Process Improvement

- i) How do you ensure the systematic improvement of the processes by which you understand the needs of your students and other stakeholders? How do you establish and maintain with these groups relationships that will enhance your processes for understanding their needs and expectations?

Notes to Criterion 3

Criterion 8, *Planning Continuous Improvement*, should explain how your planning processes incorporate your understanding of the requirements of your students and other stakeholders. If you involve students and others stakeholders directly in the planning process, explain how here.

Organizational Areas to Consider under this Criterion

Advisory and focus groups	Image and brand identification
Analysis of constituents, communities of interests, or stakeholders	Market segmentation and analysis
Board-designated mission or purposes	Parents needs and requirements
Census information	Partner institution and organization needs and requirements
Community polls and surveys	Political trend analysis
Demographic trend analysis	Specialized accreditors
Employer needs and requirements	State and Federal government expectations
Feeder schools' needs	Student and alumni surveys

4. ***Valuing People* allows the higher education institution to demonstrate its commitment to the development of the talents of all of its faculty, staff, and administrators since the efforts of all are required for institutional success. It examines an institution's systems and processes for:**

- ❑ designing, organizing, and managing work and jobs to promote individual initiative, cooperation, collaboration, innovation, and flexibility while keeping current with educational and institutional needs
- ❑ identifying, recruiting, selecting, hiring, orienting, training, developing, assigning, evaluating, retaining, replacing, and dismissing academic staff, support staff, administrative staff, volunteers, interns, etc.
- ❑ insuring that all members of a higher education institution (including faculty, staff, and students) will be treated with respect and dignity, and will be provided avenues for rational examination and redress of grievances

***Valuing People* invites an institution to analyze and improve how it:**

- designs, measures, and evaluates key human resource processes and systems
- creates an institutional environment with a strong focus on students and learning
- develops faculty, staff, and administrators to enable them and the institution to experiment, change, and innovate
- provides its people with the appropriate competencies and skills to do their job now
- prepares people to contribute to the future of the institution
- provides its people with a process that helps them understand and share in the institution's mission and vision, giving them a sense of the whole
- helps faculty, staff, and administrators to understand their role in and their responsibility and contribution to the institution
- demonstrates integrity through its ethical and humane treatment of all employees, and through care about their lives on and off the job
- recognizes the intrinsic worth and dignity of all employees
- provides training, development, and education for its employees
- measures the satisfaction of faculty, staff, and administrators in order to enhance it

Questions to Help you study your Institution using this Criterion

4. Valuing People

A) Description/Overview

- i) Describe you design the jobs and work activities of your faculty, administrators, and staff to augment the focus on student learning and achievement? How do work activities and processes contribute to communications, cooperation, high performance, organizational learning, and skill sharing? What systems do you have in place to encourage your personnel to cooperate, to make decisions about their own work, and to contribute fully and effectively?
- ii) Describe how you design your reward, compensation, and recognition systems to align with your objectives for **Helping Students Learn** and for **Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives**? How do you integrate multiple and perhaps competing objectives into a personnel evaluation system?

B) Process

- i) How do you identify the specific credentials, skills, and values required for faculty, staff, and administrators job performance? How do your hiring processes make certain people you employ possess these requisite characteristics?
- ii) How do you train and develop all faculty, staff, and administrators to contribute fully and effectively throughout their careers with your institution? How do you determine training needs? How do you prepare all personnel to contribute to a culture of continuous improvement? How do you detect and contend with gaps between the actual preparation of faculty, staff, and administrators and what you consider necessary?
- iii) How does your organization provide for and evaluate employee satisfaction, health and safety, and well being? How do you translate your employees' needs and concerns into organizational improvements?

C) Outcomes

- i) How effectively are you valuing the people you employ? Summarize your personnel-related results, including faculty, staff, and administrator satisfaction, health and safety, well being, and your employees' impact on institutional development.
- ii) How productive and effective are your faculty, staff, and administrators in helping your achieve your goals? Summarize results that illustrate the value of the work accomplished by your personnel.

D) Process Improvement

- i) How do you use your faculty, staff, and administrator work evaluation processes and results to improve job design and performance?
- ii) How do your support faculty, staff, and administrator development to support your objectives for student learning? How do you recognize and reward people's efforts in systematic continuous improvement?
- iii) How do you evaluate and improve training for all faculty, staff, and administrators? Do you follow-up to determine if the training added value to the organization and to the individual?

Notes to Criterion 4

Criterion 1, *Helping Students Learn*, asks you to examines how you define good teaching and learning and communicate your expectations to all, internally and externally. Criterion 4 should examine the ways you use these and other expectations in your selection, training, evaluation, and development of faculty and other employees.

Organizational Areas to Consider under this Criterion
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Affirmative actions policies
Evaluation, recognition, and reward of faculty, staff,
and administrators

Faculty, staff, and administrator development
Grievance policies and procedures
Job and skills review processes

Organizational development and functional review
 Orientation of faculty, staff, and administrators
 Personnel needs forecasting and planning
 Personnel policies and practices
 Policies and practices governing part-time, temporary, or adjunct personnel

Promotion policies and practices
 Reappointment policies and practices
 Safety policies and practices
 Tenure policies and practices
 Union negotiation strategies

5. *Leading and Communicating* addresses how an institution's leadership and communication structures, networks, and processes guide the institution in setting directions, making decisions, seeking future opportunities, and building and sustaining a learning environment. The leadership system includes not only those who have day-to-day supervisory or decision-making responsibility to manage the institution, but also the oversight entities such as institutional or state boards, or trustees. This criterion examines an institution's systems and processes for:

- ❑ communicating mission, philosophy, values, and objectives to all members of the institution, and for making certain those values underlie all decisions
- ❑ establishing governance and decision-making structures and procedures

***Leading and Communicating* invites an institution to analyze and improve how it:**

- analyzes its philosophy and practices concerning leadership, governance, and decision-making
- creates and effectively communicates values, directions, and expectations to everyone
- sets directions that create future opportunities for the institution and its stakeholders
- projects and communicates a strong focus on students and learning
- encourages innovation
- develops and maintains an effective leadership system
- integrates oversight entities such as institutional trustees and state boards into the leadership system
- promotes continuous learning, not just to improve overall performance, but also to involve all leaders in the ongoing challenge to enhance value for students and other stakeholders

<p>Questions to Help you study your Institution using this Criterion</p>

5. *Leading and Communicating*

A) Description/Overview

- i) Describe your leadership and communication systems. (An organizational chart and a description of groups, committees, or team and their functions may be useful in describing these systems.)

B) Process

- i) How do your leaders communicate a shared mission, vision, values and high performance expectations that address the needs of all students and important stakeholder groups? How do you ensure that the practices of your leadership system - at all institutional levels - align with your board's, senior leaders', and (if applicable) state coordinating board's expectations?

- ii) How do your leaders set directions conducive to high performance, individual development and initiative, organizational learning, and innovation, taking into account the needs and expectations of students and key stakeholder groups (including, for example, faculty, staff, and administrators, families, employers, funding and oversight agencies, and those institutions and organizations with which you have established collaborative relationships.)? How do leaders guide your institution in seeking future opportunities and building and sustaining a learning environment?
 - iii) What is the decision-making process in your institution? How do you use teams, task forces, groups, or committees to recommend and/or make decisions and to carry them out? What processes do your leaders use to communicate and engender discussion with affected groups to consider how prospective decisions may affect your students and key stakeholder groups?
 - iv) What are your institutional values and expectations regarding ethics and equity, social responsibilities, and community service/involvement? How are these identified, communicated, and integrated into your leadership system?
 - v) How are leadership abilities encouraged, developed and, strengthened among faculty, staff, and administrators? How are best practices, knowledge, and skills communicated and shared throughout your institution?
 - vi) How do you and your board ensure that your mission, vision, and values are passed on during leadership succession? Describe your leadership succession plan.
 - vii) How does communication occur between and among institutional levels?
- C) Outcomes
- i) What specific measures (quantitative and qualitative) do you use to indicate the effectiveness of your leadership and communication systems?
 - ii) Demonstrate the specific results you have achieved in your leading and communicating activities. How do they compare with the results of peer institutions? How do they compare with other higher education institutions and organizations outside of the education community?
 - iii) How do you set improvement targets for leadership and communication? What are your improvement targets?
 - iv) How are these results and improvement targets communicated to all employees as well as affected students and stakeholders?
- D) Process Improvement
- i) How do you improve your leadership and communication systems, using student, faculty, staff, and key stakeholder feedback? How are improvement priorities made sufficiently specific for effective deployment throughout your institution (i.e., college level, department level) and to your important stakeholder groups?

Notes to Criterion 5

Organizational Areas to Consider under this Criterion
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability systems Alignment of mission, objectives, and activities Board of trustees or governors Communication systems and techniques Communication technologies Decision review committees Decision-making Governance systems Institutional continuity Institutional identity and culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership development Leadership system Mission statements Operational planning Organizational chart Planning for succession Publications (e.g., in-house newsletters) Statements of values or guiding principles Strategic visioning and planning Vision or focus statements
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6. *Supporting Institutional Operations* addresses the variety of institutional support processes that, while they do not directly impact student learning, help to provide an environment in which learning can thrive. It examines an institution's systems and processes for:

- ❑ establishing, maintaining, and improving administrative institutional support programs
- ❑ providing institutional support services (e.g., accounting, maintenance, purchasing, risk management)

***Supporting Institutional Operations* invites an institution to analyze and improve how it:**

- designs, implements, operates, manages, and improves fundamental administrative processes and services that support the institution's essential operations
- measures how effectively its support services satisfy their users, both internal and external
- analyzes and uses satisfaction data to ensure that these services contribute to the achievement of institutional goals, particularly Helping Students Learn
- uses data on process performance to improve support processes

Questions to Help you study your Institution using this Criterion

6. *Supporting Institutional Operations*

A) Description/Overview

- i) What are your key student and administrative support processes? What are the support process needs of students and important stakeholder groups?
- ii) How do your key student and administrative support services reinforce student learning (Criterion #1) and help achieve other distinctive objectives (Criterion # 2)?
- iii) *how do you determine, address and improve your learning support systems to contribute to achieving student learning objectives*

B) Process

- i) How do you identify the support and administrative processes needs of students and key stakeholder groups?
- ii) How are your key student and administrative support processes managed on a day-to-day basis to ensure that they are meeting the needs of students and important stakeholder groups? How do you document your processes and implement changes over time?
- iii) What kinds of training do you use to improve your key student and administrative support processes? How do you simplify and reduce ineffective or wasteful activities?

C) Outcomes

- i) What specific measures (quantitative and qualitative) do you use to indicate the effectiveness of your support processes?
- ii) Demonstrate the specific results you have achieved in your support processes that enhance learning and operational effectiveness. How do they compare with the results of peer institutions? How do they compare with other higher education institutions and organizations outside of the education community?
- iii) How do you set improvement targets for support processes? What are your improvement targets?

- iv) How are these results and improvement targets communicated to all employees as well as affected students and stakeholders?

D) Process Improvement

- i) How do you improve your support processes using student, faculty, staff, and key stakeholder feedback?

Notes to Criterion 6

Student support services could include admissions, bookstore, campus activities, campus safety, computing, disability services, financial aid, food services, health, library, registration, etc. Administrative services could include accounting, business office, cashiering, faculty/staff support, etc.

Internal stakeholder groups could include, for example, faculty, staff, and organizational units, such as colleges, divisions, or departments. External stakeholders groups could include, for example, employers, community, alumni, etc.

Organizational Areas to Consider under this Criterion
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Administrative services Athletic facilities Audio-visual services Capital campaigns Career /placement services Classrooms, laboratories, studios, and rehearsal halls Endowment Financial aid Fund-raising Intercollegiate athletics Lectures and performance series Library Maintenance Orientation Personal counseling	Public information Public relations systems Public safety Purchasing Registration policies, procedures, and systems Religious life Residence life Risk management Student activities Student health services Student life Student services Technology and equipment services Work-study programs
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7. *Measuring Effectiveness* examines the information system the institution employs to collect and use data to responsibly manage itself and to drive performance improvement. It examines an institution's systems and processes for:

- examining all processes related to the information it does or might collect or use
- gathering, maintaining, and making available a variety of information it collects to those who need it, including data on students and other stakeholder groups; data on institutional programs, academic and other; data on the performance of institutional operations and processes; and information concerning students, stakeholder groups, programs, and performance in comparable institutions
- selecting, managing, and using information and data to support overall institution goals, with strong emphasis on action plans and performance improvement

***Measuring Effectiveness* invites an institution to analyze and improve how it:**

- streamlines ineffective processes for information collection, storage, and retrieval
- knows where it stands relative to comparable institutions and other organizations by:

- determining its needs and priorities for comparative information and data
- determining criteria and methods for seeking sources of comparative information and data
- organizing and using comparative information and data to drive improvement
- evaluating and improving its selection, communication, and use of comparative information and data to keep current with changing needs
- integrates and analyzes information and data from all parts of the institution in assessing performance
- compares performance levels, providing impetus for major change and improvement or signaling changes taking place in educational practices
- reviews performance and capabilities and uses the review findings to improve performance and capabilities relative to its goals and plans, and takes into account changing educational and operational needs in these reviews
- analyzes, at the institutional level (e.g., for the governing board), overall performance to guide its processes toward key results
- translates review findings into priorities for improvement — sufficiently specific for effective deployment throughout the institution and to its stakeholders and partners

Questions to Help you study your Institution using this Criterion

7. Measuring Effectiveness

A) Description/Overview

- i) Describe your central information system.
- ii) What are the principal factors that determine your competitive success? How are these assessed?

B) Process

- i) Regarding your central information system, how do you select, manage, and use information and data (including current performance information) to support student learning (Criterion #1), overall institutional objectives (Criterion #2), action plans, and performance improvement efforts?
- ii) What are the resource (funding, staff, etc.) requirements committed to your information system?
- iii) How do you determine needs and priorities for comparative information and data?
- iv) What are your criteria and methods for selecting sources of comparative information and data within and outside the academic community? How do you select peers or comparisons and gather information about them?
- v) How do you organize and use comparative information and data to assure continuous improvement and foster breakthrough thinking?
- vi) How do you share comparative information throughout the organization?
- vii) How does your information and data system track the performance of key processes and the accomplishment of key institutional objectives?
- viii) How, at the institutional level (e.g., for the governing board and/or state coordinating board), do you analyze overall performance (student learning, human resources, finances, etc.) to guide processes toward key results? How do you coordinate and communicate information and reporting responsibilities for external agencies?

C) Outcomes

- i) What specific measures (quantitative and qualitative) do you use to indicate the effectiveness of your information system?
- ii) How do you gauge and evaluate the effectiveness of your information system and related processes? Demonstrate the specific results you have achieved in your information system processes. How does your effectiveness and results compare with those of other higher education institutions and organizations outside of the education community?
- iii) How do you set improvement targets for your information system? What are your improvement targets?
- iv) How are these results and improvement targets communicated to all employees as well as affected students and stakeholders?

D) Process Improvement

- i) How do you improve your information system using student, faculty, staff, and key stakeholder feedback? How are improvement priorities made sufficiently specific for effective deployment throughout your institution (i.e., college level, department level, individual faculty) and to your important stakeholder groups?

Organizational Areas to Consider under this Criterion
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Analysis of variance (between previous planned targets and reality) Assessment programs Balanced scorecards Benchmarking Comparative data Computing hardware and software Computing support processes Credit hour generation Dashboard measures Database development process Decision support systems (DSS) Degree productivity	Discrepancy analysis Focus group research Goal- or performance-target-setting Information management systems Institutional reporting Institutional research Management information systems (MIS) Personnel records Student and stakeholder satisfaction Student records Survey and forms design Telephone interviewing Trend, correlation, and other statistical analysis
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8. *Planning Continuous Improvement* examines how an institution aligns what it wants or hopes to do with what it actually does. It examines an institution's systems and processes for:

- ❑ establishing operational plans and performance targets for academic programs, academic support programs, and institutional support programs
- ❑ allocating resources (money, space, materials, equipment, and personnel) in support of institutional planning and priorities

***Planning Continuous Improvement* invites an institution to analyze and improve how it:**

- organizes, performs, and evaluates planning and target-setting activity throughout the institution, in all institutional units
- develops and implements plans, goals, and key performance measures, supporting these through budgeting and resource allocation and renewal
- encourages long-range or strategic thinking and action to bring about key alignments in support of goals

- provides a results-oriented focus, accommodating to change
- aligns daily work with longer-range institutional goals
- maintains a future-oriented basis for decisions and priorities
- aligns unit activities with overall institutional goals, particularly the paramount goal of Helping Students Learn

Questions to Help you study your Institution using this Criterion
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8. Planning Continuous ImprovementA) Description/Overview

- i) What are your short- and long-term strategies (strategic directions)?
- ii) What is your institutional mission and vision? How do your short- and long-term strategies align with the mission and vision?

B) Process

- i) What processes are in place to modify institutional decisions regarding mission and vision? Who is involved? How do you ensure that available and/or projected resources support mission and vision modifications? How do you determine the effectiveness of modifications to the mission and vision?
- ii) How do you translate your mission and vision to the department/unit level? How are departments/units involved in helping your institution achieve your mission and vision? What mechanisms do you employ to communicate requirements, receive feedback, and achieve overall alignment?
- iii) How do you set strategic directions and translate these directions into a clear basis for communicating, deploying, and aligning institutional objectives? Describe the key influences, challenges, and requirements that might most affect your directions and decisions
- iv) How do you use key student, stakeholder (internal and external), and societal requirements as input to setting directions to help ensure that ongoing process improvements are aligned with your overall strategic directions? How do you deal with conflicting expectations of varying stakeholder groups?
- v) How do you develop key action plans to support these institutional directions? Describe the plans you regularly produce, implement, and revise, and explain how progress reports are communicated to students, faculty, staff, and important stakeholder groups.
- vi) Regarding institutional strategic directions, how do you ensure faculty, staff, and administrator capability, taking into account short- and longer-term requirements?
- vii) How do you implement action plans and track resulting performance? How do you communicate, deploy, and track progress on your plans?
- viii) How do you allocate and/or reallocate resources (funding, staff, space, equipment, etc.) to ensure alignment with strategic directions and action plans?

C) Outcomes

- i) What specific measures (quantitative and qualitative) do you use to indicate the effectiveness of your strategic planning efforts?
- ii) Demonstrate the specific results you have achieved in your strategic planning activities. How do they compare with the results of peer institutions? How do they compare with other higher education institutions and organizations outside of the education community?
- iii) How do you set improvement targets for your strategic planning system or processes? What are your improvement targets?
- iv) How are these results and improvement targets communicated in a manner that provides appropriate feedback to affected students and stakeholders?

D) Process Improvement

- i) How do you improve your strategic planning process using student, faculty, staff, and important stakeholder feedback?

Organizational Areas to Consider under this Criterion

Analysis of variance (between previous planned targets and reality)	Goal and target setting
Business plans	Improvement system
Changing demographics	Innovation
Changing requirements	Instructional technology developments
Changing student career interests	Internal strengths and weaknesses (e.g., faculty and staff capabilities, program health, physical resources)
Curriculum planning	Marketing plans
Deployment of resources	Needs assessment
Employers' needs	Organizational planning
Enrollment planning	Personnel needs forecasting and planning
Environmental scanning	Planning system
Expansion plans (physical, curricular, operational, etc.)	Program planning
Experimentation	Recruitment plans
Facilities planning	Resource allocation and management
Federal or state educational mandates	Resource optimization systems
Feedback and monitoring systems	Strategic or tactical planning
Financial management system	Succession planning
Financial planning	Systems for deploying resources
Forecasting	

9. *Building Collaborative Relationships* examines an institution's relationships – current and potential – to analyze how they contribute to the institution's accomplishing its mission. It examines an institution's systems and processes for:

- promoting, monitoring, and evaluating internal responsiveness, cooperation, and collaboration
- maintaining contact with feeder and receiver institutions and schools to ensure common understanding of the needs of transfer students
- establishing, reviewing, and evaluating partnerships with other institutions and organizations

***Building Collaborative Relationships* invites an institution to analyze and improve how it:**

- promotes cooperation and collaboration among its component parts -- units, divisions, departments, colleges, offices, etc.
- removes barriers to internal cooperation, diminishing the widespread "silo mentality"
- establishes productive links with:
 - schools that send it students
 - institutions and businesses that receive its students
 - businesses with which it contracts for services and supplies
 - communities upon which its health and success depend
- maintains relationships that promote student transfer and achievement, including ties with:

- secondary schools, community and technical colleges
- employers and corporate or proprietary training programs
- graduate and professional higher education institutions
- builds collaborative relationships among:
 - the communities where the institution operates
 - the religious or political communities to which the institution belongs
 - higher education associations
 - the broader U.S. higher education community

Questions to Help you study your Institution using this Criterion

9. *Building Collaborative Relationships*

A) Description/Overview

- i) Describe your key collaborative relationships

B) Process

- i) How do you create, prioritize, and maintain relationships with the educational institutions and other organizations from which you receive your students? How do you ensure smooth transitions, realistic expectations, and necessary skills are accounted for upon entry and beyond?
- ii) How do you create, prioritize, and maintain relationships with educational institutions and employers that depend on the supply of students/graduates that meet these organization's requirements? How do you listen to these relationship partners and address their needs?
- iii) How do you create, prioritize, and maintain relationships with organizations that provide services to your students? How do you ensure relationship partners are meeting student needs and expectations?
- iv) How do you create, prioritize, and maintain relationships with external agencies, consortia partners, and the general community to provide for their needs? How do you provide for their needs and assure these needs are being met?
- v) How do you create and maintain relationships within the institution? How do you assure integration and communication across these relationships?

C) Outcomes

- i) What specific measures (quantitative and qualitative) do you use to indicate the effectiveness of your key collaborative relationships?
- ii) Demonstrate the specific results you have achieved in your key collaborative relationships. How do they compare with the results of peer institutions? How do they compare with other higher education institutions and organizations outside of the education community?
- iii) How do you set targets for improving your results in building collaborative relationships? What are your improvement targets?
- iv) How are these results and improvement targets communicated to relationship partners, employees, as well as affected students and stakeholders?

D) Process Improvement

- i) How do you improve your key collaborative relationships using collaborative partner, student, faculty, staff, and key stakeholder feedback?

Notes to Criterion 9

Involvement of external collaborative partners in planning processes may also be addressed in Criterion 8.

An institution's external collaborative partners might include organizations that are the sources of its entering students (high schools, community colleges, places of work); organizations that are the destination of its exiting students (4-year institutions, graduate schools, places of work); suppliers such as food services, book suppliers, and student recruiting services; external agencies such as state coordinating boards or state, local, or national governments; religious organizations; other institutions or consortia of institutions; etc.

Organizational Areas to Consider under this Criterion

Advisory boards	institutions, allowing for public
Alumni support	understanding/appraisal of educational experiences
Associations and memberships	and transfer
Colloquia	Internal consistency
Communication with feeder and receiver institutions and schools	Joint high school-college programs
Community outreach programs	Partnerships with business and industry
Establishing and reviewing partnerships	Partnerships with other institutions
Insuring that degree titles, course titles, academic credits, and academic performance judgments (i.e., grades) will have similar meanings across	Reciprocity and articulation agreements
	Transfer programs and practices
	Understanding the needs of transfer students

Glossary. AQIP provides the Quality Criteria as a tool for your institution to study itself using the principles and perspectives of continuous improvement. Explanations of some terms used the questions following each Criterion may be helpful, but AQIP understands that every institution has a unique culture, and that the particular language an institution uses will reflect and embody that culture. Therefore AQIP encourages institutions to use the Quality Criteria with their broad purpose in mind – institutional self-assessment and improvement — and to avoid creating harmful complexity by attempting to narrowly define every term. There are no "trick questions" here and common sense interpretations of words should be sufficient.

Curricula	The questions use curricula to refer broadly to programs, courses, lectures, discussions, laboratories, studio or shop activities, practicums, internships, and all co-curricular activities the institution designs and makes available to promote learning.
Deployment	The extent to which a particular system or process is used throughout institutional operations.
Design	Questions using design ask you to examine and describe how your institution — or its component parts — structures general and specific programs: who does it, when do they do, how long it takes, what steps are involved, what information and resources are used as input to the design process, and what concretely emerges as the output (e.g., paper plans and specifications, written guidelines, tacit understandings among the participants, etc.).
Determine	An institution can act consciously and deliberately set or define requirements, expectations, or processes, or it can allow chance, tradition, or other forces to do so. Questions asking you how you determine something ask you to focus on the processes you use to reach these decision, whether you do so deliberately or not.
Document	Documentation is the act of gathering concrete, factual evidence (often, but not exclusively, in the form of documents or numerical indices) that proves an assertion. Undocumented beliefs,

intuitions, and tacit understandings are often accurate, but they may not provide as solid a structure for future action as does documented understanding.

- Expectations** To improve, an institution must articulate its targets or desired outcomes for student learning or other activities. Educational **expectations** specify the learning— knowledge, skills, competencies, abilities, performance, values, habits, behaviors, attitudes, and preferences — that students will possess upon completion of their educational experience. Your **expectations** explain what you want your students to know and be able to do after their education that they did not know or could not do before, and when or for how long you expect students to exhibit the benefits of this acquired learning.
- Goals** For simplicity, AQIP does not distinguish between goals and **objectives** (or short- and long-term goals), and so uses the term objectives consistently in these questions. If you use goals and objectives differently, your responses should capture whatever distinctions you make within your institution.
- Mission** **Mission** communicates a broad understanding of what an institution does, and whom it does it for. The verb *educate* captures an essential element in the **mission** of all higher learning institutions, but most mission statements will specify who the institution will educate (e.g., anyone, local high school graduates, would-be welders, physicians) at what levels (e.g., undergraduate, doctoral, etc.), in what localities, etc. In formally stating these intentions, some institutions use **mission**, some use *purposes*, some *mission and purposes*. Some have **mission** statements, some *vision* statements, and some statements, separate or combined, describing both *mission and vision*. For simplicity, AQIP uses **mission** for all these, but feel free to translate any statement using **mission** into the words people use in *your* institution. AQIP distinguishes an organization's broad **mission** from the specific **objectives** it sets to achieve its mission. If your institution's mission statement includes both **mission and objectives** (and many college and university statements do), pay attention to how AQIP distinguishes these in its questions. Interpret **mission** to include vision, institutional values, guiding principles, core principles, and similar concepts.
- Objectives** AQIP uses this neutral word to describe the concrete actions people at an institution engage in so that the institution will accomplish its mission. In many settings, **objectives** is synonymous with **goals, purposes, targets, strategies, expectations**, etc.
- Outcomes** AQIP uses this term to refer to the results actually achieved by a system or process, regardless of its objective or targets, and independent of the wishes or expectations of those involved. Often, **outcomes** refers to achieved student learning, but it can also refer to the measured performance of other institutional systems and processes.
- Pedagogy** The questions use **pedagogy** to refer to the instructional methods (including lectures, discussions, case studies, internships, group projects, and the application of technology to learning) that the institution uses to help students learn.
- Requirements** **Requirements** are the specifications or "necessary ingredients" around which a system or process is designed. Specifications may refer to the input a process requires, or to the outputs demanded (wanted, expected) by those the process serves. Often people use **expectations, needs, wants, desires**, and **requests** as synonyms for **requirements**.
- Stakeholders** **Stakeholders** include all of the people and groups that have a critical stake or investment in the institution's future, including faculty, staff, and administrators, students' families, employers, funding and oversight agencies, and those institutions and organizations with which your institution has established collaborative relationships. Current and former students are also stakeholders; therefore the Criteria refer to "students and other stakeholders." Students and other stakeholders judge whether an institution is a success or failure in meeting *their* particular needs; these judgments ultimately determine the institution's well being and continuation.