

THE EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW AND PRESENTATION

(See *Handbook*, p. 45-46)

Purposes of the Review: The Educational Effectiveness Review provides an opportunity for the institution to explore holistically its approaches to educational effectiveness and assess whether institutional systems, such as course and program design, faculty support, and program review are effectively linked to evidence of student learning and are consistent with the educational goals and academic standards of the institution. The Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness is demonstrated by the following: *The institution evidences clear and appropriate educational objectives and design at the institutional and program levels, and employs processes of review, including the collection and use of data, that assure the delivery of programs and learner accomplishments at a level of performance appropriate for the degree or certificate awarded. (2001 Handbook of Accreditation, p. 5-6)*

Outcomes of the Review (*Handbook*, p. 36): The five outcomes of the accreditation review process for the institution include:

1. The development of and more effective use of indicators of institutional performance and educational effectiveness to support institutional planning and decision making;
2. Greater clarity about the institution's educational objectives and criteria for defining and evaluating those objectives;
3. Improvement of the institution's capacity for self-review and of its systems of quality assurance;
4. A deeper understanding of student learning, the development of more varied and effective methods of assessing learning, and the use of the results of this process to improve programs and institutional practices; and
5. Systematic engagement of the faculty with issues of assessing and improving teaching and learning processes within the institution, and with aligning support systems for faculty more effectively toward this end.

Principal Elements of the Review:

The Educational Effectiveness Presentation includes elements common to all Institutional Presentations as well as a particular approach or model that is adopted by the institution to align with its own issues and priorities, especially as they relate to evidence of educational effectiveness (see #2 below and examples on the pages following):

1. A description of the institution's approach to educational effectiveness, including an analysis of its intentional system of quality assurance for improvement of teaching and learning; the kinds of evidence of learning it collects; and the way in which faculty and other constituencies work with such evidence to support further inquiry and improvement.
2. One of a number of specific approaches or models as described in the *Handbook* (pp. 46-47). The institution is free to combine or adapt one of these or use another approach to engage educational effectiveness in depth.
3. Supporting evidence for the analysis that builds on the institutional portfolio prepared for the Preparatory Review.
4. An integrative component or chapter.

SPECIAL THEMES APPROACH/MODEL

Who Might Use this Approach: The Special Themes model enables institutions to explore major topics or areas identified from the institution's priorities and needs. This approach has proven particularly useful for institutions with already-established quality assurance systems who wish to address problems that have been identified from their developing systems of evidence. The Special Themes model may also be useful to institutions which are just beginning to develop and establish their institution-wide systems of assessment related to teaching and learning, as it would help them to focus on selected areas or aspects of quality assurance that need to be established.

Description of the Special Themes Model: Under this approach, institutions typically select three or more topics to study in depth. These topics should be comprehensive in scope, consequential for the institution, and should cut across, or involve, several areas of the institution. Typically, each topic represents an area the institution wishes to improve. Each topic should have its own analytical essay and be addressed as a scholarly endeavor, with researchable hypotheses; an explicit, research-based approach; the analysis of evidence; and recommendations for institutional action. At least one topic must deal explicitly with student learning, including concrete data for educational results, and in-depth evidentiary analysis linked to improvement efforts.

Characteristics of the Special Themes Model:

- The topics should address identified institutional priorities and needs
- The themes should be comprehensive, involving several areas of the institution
- Each theme essay should move beyond description of activities to include analysis and reflection on the evidence the institution has collected about teaching and learning
- Faculty should be involved in selecting the themes, developing the analytical essays, and constructing the Institutional Presentation
- The institution is expected to work with authentic student work and evidence of student learning
- The foci and intent of the Standards (especially Standards 2 and 4) will be used by teams as the frame for evaluating the effectiveness of the Institutional Presentation
- The supporting evidence should be organized either by the Standards or by the themes and should include an updated table from that in the Proposal listing current assessment studies, results of any summative learning measures deemed important by the institution (e.g., licensure pass rates, capstone courses, etc.), plus the results and analysis from such assessments.

What has been learned about Special Themes Models: This approach has been most useful when institutions have chosen truly consequential topics and posed them as researchable questions. The most effective themes are those that have appropriate scope, neither too broad (over-promises and unfeasible) nor too narrow (not important enough to engage the institution). Since at least one of the themes must give attention to student learning, it has been important that institutions have concrete data on educational results, more than student satisfaction survey data.

Some examples of Special Themes that proved to be particularly effective areas of study are: how to most effectively integrate teaching, learning, and research; how to develop best practices in involving undergraduate students in research; how to structure program review to incorporate student learning assessment; the integration of information technology with effective teaching and learning; an in-depth analysis of student writing across disciplines at different stages of the student's enrollment; and the alignment of program and department objectives with university-wide objectives to focus on results that matter.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING-BASED APPROACH/MODEL

Under the Strategic Planning-Based model, the *Handbook* (pages 45-46) guides institutions to *identify a limited number of areas of emphasis in its current strategic plan for in-depth review* for this specific report model. The report would be expected to align the topics with a demonstration of improvement of the institution's educational effectiveness, and to provide evidence of student learning results.

Description of the Strategic Planning-Based Model: Under this approach, the Strategic Planning-Based report enables a college or university to frame its review around selected institutional directions, goals, and objectives aligned with its strategic planning. The presentation would be organized around issues of broad institutional importance, commitment, and priority in such a way to enable the institution to demonstrate how it meets the expectations of Standards 2 (teaching and learning; scholarship; student learning) and Standard 4 (strategic thinking and planning; commitment to learning and improvement). This approach is not intended to be used by institutions to substitute a strategic planning process for the WASC self-review, but to use the lens of strategic priorities as the basis for improving institutional performance and educational effectiveness.

This approach/model provides opportunity to integrate both institutional *and* educational goals within the framework of the new model of accreditation. In particular, the model could assist both constituencies within the institution and the evaluation team understands and analyzes how the strategic planning effort supports institutional development and the improvement of student learning. The institution may find selecting this model is advantageous in encouraging cross-institutional partnerships in alignment with both the institution's strategic priorities and with the values of the WASC Standards.

The Strategic Planning-Based model used by the institution should have student learning as one of its central goals. The accreditation process focuses the inquiry on *results*. A report under this model will need, therefore, to align the planning process with concrete evidence of student learning outcomes, with decision-making and implementation structures that support improved student learning.

What Has Been Learned about Strategic Planning-Based Models: A number of institutions used the strategic planning approach before the *2001 Handbook* was adopted and several institutions are now using this approach as part of their Educational Effectiveness Presentation. Some initial observations about institutional presentations organized around strategic planning include:

- This approach enables educational effectiveness and improving student learning to become incorporated as a strategic institutional priority and part of the institutional planning process
- It is an effective way to involve key leaders (e.g. the President, Board, CAO) across the institution and align their priorities with the focus of the Educational Effectiveness review
- It allows the institution to evaluate the effectiveness of its educational mission through review of learning results across the institution
- Data generated and analyzed can be used both for assessing the effectiveness of strategic planning and the Educational Effectiveness Presentation.

COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH/MODEL

Who Might Use This Approach/Model: The Comprehensive approach/model enables an institution to review how it supports student learning and the effectiveness of its overall quality assurance system. A requirement for institutions seeking Candidacy or Initial Accreditation, it can also be used by well-established institutions to help understand the effectiveness of their quality assurance systems and the overall impact on student learning, in relation to institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.

Description of the Comprehensive Model: Under this approach/model, the institution will produce a single comprehensive document describing how it goes about investigating and assuring educational quality, including the uses to which educational and learning results are put. For new institutions, the Standards, particularly 2 and 4, will frame the approach used for the review and can include a comprehensive review of assessment; a comprehensive examination of how the institution might become more learning centered; and an extensive review of the effectiveness of the institution's overall approach to educational effectiveness. While new institutions are required to conduct their reviews in the context of the Standards, well-established institutions can cluster several Criteria for Review and use them as a lens or points of inquiry for their self-reviews. (For example, the set of CFRs could include 2.2, 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 4.2, and 4.7.) In all cases, the institutions are expected to include evidence-based discussions of student learning, based on educational results.

Characteristics:

- The completed report should move beyond description of activities to include analysis and reflection on the evidence the institution has collected
- Faculty should be involved in developing the assessment strategy; developing the report and constructing the Institutional Presentation
- The institution is expected to work with authentic student work and evidence of student learning
- The supporting evidence should reflect the organization of the report
- An update of the table in the Proposal should be included that lists current assessment studies, results of any summative learning measures deemed important by the institution (e.g., licensure pass rates, capstone courses, etc.), plus results and analysis from surveys of graduates and current students, and any employer feedback on former student performance, plus the results and analyses from such assessments. It is important that institutions use authentic evidence of student learning (learning outcomes) in addition to other types of measures, such as student satisfaction survey data, alumni surveys or field supervisor evaluations.

What has been learned about Comprehensive Models: This approach/model has been of great use for in-depth analyses done by new and well-established institutions as the basis for a thoroughgoing review of institutional quality assurance systems. These all-inclusive reviews have helped understand the extent to which student learning has been enhanced, the degree of institutional learning-centeredness and to gain an overall perspective on an institution's Core Commitment to Educational Effectiveness.

AUDIT-BASED APPROACH/MODEL

Who Might Use This Approach: all institutions can use the audit approaches described below as part of the accreditation review process or as part of any ongoing quality assurance system. It can be the exclusive basis for an institutional presentation for educational effectiveness, or used as a part of any approach adopted to assess and improve educational quality and learning results. The audit is an effective tool for deeper inquiry and assuring consistency of learning-centeredness across the institution.

Description of the Audit-Based Model: The audit-based approach can take many forms. Different types of academic audits are currently in use in the British Quality Assurance Process, the Hong Kong Teaching Learning Quality Process Review (TLQPR) and the accreditation process of the new Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC). In addition, CSU, Fullerton experimented with an academic audit approach for its comprehensive evaluation in 2000, and found it to be quite effective and successful. Three approaches to using academic audits are described below:

1. Audit as a means of verification and validation: is what we assert is happening to students actually happening? Using this approach, institutions can undertake transcript analyses, review student and faculty files or “develop an audit trail” by following several students through their whole career at the institution (transfer and native) and review whether institutional policies and procedures have been followed and accomplished, and evidence of student learning achieved and documented. Such audits have been useful in discovering major gaps in policies, processes, procedures, documentation and record keeping patterns and the tracking of learning results. As part of the new Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) process, all institutions are asked to develop a quality assurance map, visually portraying how quality is assured at the institutional and program level. Such a visual representation can be helpful to see whether there is effective alignment of individual quality elements and whether a learning-centered orientation is reflected in the quality system.

2. Audit for assessing the effectiveness and learning-centeredness of core processes: Good educational results come from sound academic processes that are organized and aligned to focus on and generate effective learning. Core process reviews enable an institution (or evaluation team) to move beyond the asset approach (“we have this activity/process functioning so it must be effective”) to probe and evaluate whether the process/activity is actually accomplishing its stated learning objectives and effectively aligned with other elements of the institution’s quality assurance system. For example, institutions have reviewed the effectiveness of such core processes as course approval, institutional research and assessment functions, faculty orientation, faculty development and support, and program review with a specific focus on whether each process/activity focuses on student learning and is effectively aligned with the institution’s quality assurance system.

The academic audit has also proven to be an effective means of assessing consistency of a process (e.g., program review) across the institution and for engaging a number of units (or all units) in a common student-learning centered conversation. CSU Fullerton, building on the British Academic Audit model, for example, developed as a common template for all academic departments a set of questions organized around student learning. Each core process unit or department was asked to respond to these questions in a response no longer than 2 pages:

- a. How is this process (or the department) structured to reflect and implement the University’s mission and its goals for student learning, faculty and staff learning, and an effective environment for learning?

- b. How do you decide what this core process and the program in which it is embedded should achieve? (Describe the means that you employ to reach agreement about the outcomes you desire from this core process.)
- c. What do you expect students, faculty, staff, and/or administrators to know and be able to do as a result of engaging in this core process?
- d. How do you communicate these expectations to relevant constituencies within the academic community?
- e. How do you know that this core process is accomplishing what you expect it to achieve?
- f. How do you use this information (the answer to question 5) to improve results?

The University (and the evaluation team) reviewed and discussed these responses, and the evaluation team selected a specific number of units to review, relying upon the 2-page summary as the departure point for discussion. This process, within the University and by the evaluation team, proved to be highly effective as a way of assessing the range of variation of unit responses and underlying evidence, to determine whether there was cross-institutional consistency and effectiveness. This approach allows an institution to move beyond the individual good practice or single exemplary units to determine whether institutional priorities with respect to learning are, in fact, institutionalized.

3. Audit to develop a coherent learning-centered quality assurance system. Institutions have used the above approaches to develop a more coherent system of quality assurance. In this regard, one very effective approach has been the development of the quality assurance stakeholders' colloquium: Developed in the Hong Kong Academic Audit process, all of those involved with quality assurance for assessing and improving student learning at the institution meet to discuss their different functions, processes, timelines, reports, and activities. Such meetings have proven to be extremely useful in improving understanding and coordination of units, aligning activities, and in refining indicators of performance for greater use.