

Compliance Components – Academic Units

Separate compliance components that constitute discrete issues to be addressed in developing a convincing argument for compliance in the Compliance Certification are underlined for each applicable requirement and standard. A narrative that addresses and documents some, but not all, of the compliance components is incomplete.

Suggestions: The “suggestions” provided below are guides to developing and documenting a narration that thoroughly addresses these compliance components.

Excerpts citing noncompliance: The “excerpts” are provided to assist Applicants and Candidates in identifying typical shortcomings in the narratives and documentation presented in support of an institution’s assertion of compliance; taken from reports developed by SACSCOC review committees, these excerpts are all part of some committee’s explanation of its finding of noncompliance.

Comprehensive Standards:

3.3 Institutional Effectiveness

3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (**Institutional Effectiveness**):

Suggestion: *Cross-reference the narrative and documentation developed for CR 2.5 as appropriate. Note, however, that CR 2.5 refers to planning and evaluation for the over-all institution, while CS 3.1.1 refers to educational programs and other units at the institution.*

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

Suggestion: *Ensure that data displays address all locations and both traditional and electronic delivery.*

Suggestion: *Ensure that there is evidence of review of both the education program itself and of the student learning outcomes for each educational program.*

Suggestion: *Ensure that goals/objectives and data gathered are meaningful.*

Excerpt citing noncompliance: *“In most reports, assessment results are presented in very general terms – ‘Students in most cases do well on their methodology and analysis courses.’ Area reports do not typically provide evidence of the analysis of assessment results to inform plans for improvement.”*

3.3.1.3 educational support services

Excerpt citing noncompliance: *“The institution provided a few examples of implemented and planned changes; however, the institution did not provide sufficient evidence of specific documented improvements in the educational support services based on analysis of the specific assessment results.”*

[Notice that 3.3.1.4 and 3.3.1.5 do not need to be addressed by all institutions.]

3.3.1.4 research within its educational mission, if appropriate

Excerpt citing noncompliance: “Both research units identified three objectives, which are essentially unit activities. Expected outcomes (benefits for campus constituencies) are not identified.”

3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate

Excerpt citing noncompliance: “Although it is evident that in recent years the institution has made some progress in developing an assessment program in public service/outreach units, evidence provided in the Compliance Certification indicates that implementation of the institution’s assessment requirements is uneven across the programs. Furthermore, information in section four of the institution’s assessment report (‘Describe how assessment results were used to improve the unit’) is frequently vague and/or refers to future actions. The institution simply did not provide sufficient evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results.”

3.7 Faculty

3.7.1 The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes.

Suggestion: Ensure that the qualifications are directly and specifically linked to the courses assigned to the faculty member.

For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. (See Commission guidelines “Faculty Credentials.”) **(Faculty competence)**

Suggestion: Support justifications of faculty qualifications and experience through third-party documentation, such as transcripts and letters of recommendation, rather than relying on faculty-generated documents, such as resumes and personal websites. However, do not include transcripts or letters of recommendation with the Application for Membership.

Suggestion: When developing justifications for faculty whose expertise derives from personal/professional experience rather than from degrees earned, use the compliance components provided in the standard as appropriate for competence, effectiveness, and capacity as the organizing principle for presenting the documentation.

Excerpt citing noncompliance: “The faculty roster was found to be incomplete. In some cases, courses taught were missing; in others, the academic degrees of the faculty member were not presented. Lacking a complete faculty profile, the Committee was unable to determine the competency of thirteen faculty members.”

3.7.4 The institution ensures adequate procedures for safeguarding and protecting academic freedom. **(Academic freedom)**

For all standards that require a procedure, institutions must document publication of the procedure in appropriate institutional documents.

Excerpt citing noncompliance: “*The institution’s Handbook of Policies and Procedures for Faculty and Staff clearly and narrowly defines the boundaries within which faculty and students are free to think, conduct research, and explore ideas. However, the institution’s published statements regarding academic freedom do not refer to any established procedures for protecting or safeguarding the freedom of inquiry that is granted.*”

- 3.7.5 The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. **(Faculty role in governance)**

For four standards – CS 3.2.3 (Board conflict of interest), CS 3.2.5 (Board dismissal), CS 3.7.5 (Faculty role in governance), and FR 4.5 (Student complaints) – institutions must explicitly document implementation and enforcement of the required policy in addition to publication.