



*Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
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INTERPRETATIONS TO THE *PRINCIPLES OF ACCREDITATION*

Interpretation on Sampling

Relevant Standards:

Standard 7.3 (*Administrative effectiveness*)

Standard 8.2.a (*Student outcomes: educational programs*)

Standard 8.2.c (*Student outcomes: academic and student services*)

Introduction

Member institutions are expected to be able to demonstrate effectiveness in the areas of administrative services (Standard 7.3), educational programs (Standard 8.2.a), and academic and student services (Standard 8.2.c). The volume of material represented by assessment activities can be extensive, particularly at larger and more complex institutions. To this end, an institution may choose to provide a sampling of reports and materials to support its case for compliance with these standards at the time of a comprehensive committee review (i.e., Reaffirmation, Fifth-Year Interim Report, Merger), with the caveat that a SACSCOC committee always has the prerogative to conduct a more in-depth review of an institution's data/findings/analysis related to institutional effectiveness than was provided via sampling.

Interpretation

Sampling, for the purposes of accreditation, includes the following three elements:

- 1) A representation that is mindful of the institution's mission
- 2) A valid cross-section of the institution as a whole
 - a. Units from across the administrative organizational chart, with every major division represented (Standard 7.3)
 - b. Educational programs from every school or division (and across all levels), with every major division and level of program represented. Sampling should be inclusive of off-campus instructional sites and distance or correspondence course offerings, as applicable; at a minimum, the institution should clarify that assessment activities are inclusive of these modes of delivery and explain that process (Standard 8.2.a).

- c. Units from across the academic and student services, with every major division represented (Standard 8.2.c)
- 3) A compelling case – presented as part of the narrative – as to why the sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution’s administrative services, educational programs, or academic and student services, respectively. Sampling does not preclude the institution from having effectiveness data and analysis available for all programs and services.

Document History

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