Clear & Convincing Evidence

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Session Description

In the new self-evaluation reports under the 2014 ACCJC standards, colleges must more fully describe and document the evidence of meeting the standards and, further, analyze and evaluate the evidence to make sound judgments about institutional quality and set future directions as captured in the Quality Focus Essay (QFE). Good evidence for meeting the accreditation standards is “intentional, purposeful, interpreted upon, and cumulative.” In this session, participants will learn how to better document and evaluate evidence to make actionable judgments about systems and processes using a checklist and other tools to assess what counts as credible evidence.
Session Learning Outcomes

• You will be able to...
  • Recall two of five characteristics of evidence for accreditation.
  • Share some ideas with colleagues regarding examples of good evidence.
  • Restate a reflective question about evidence.
  • Identify at least one pitfall in selecting evidence for accreditation re-affirmation.
  • Explain to a colleague some of the key attributes of the evaluation and analysis section of the self-evaluation report.
The New Model and Structure of the Self Evaluation

1. Evidence of Meeting the Standard
2. Analysis and Evaluation
   - Progress Monitor
   - Changes Made During and in the Future Based on the Evaluation
   - Point to the QFE
     - Needed Changes
     - Development
     - Expansion
     - Institutionalization
Self-Evaluation Report

- ACCJC-
  - 25,000 word target (~100 pages)
  - Commonly the reports now run 400-500 pages
- WASC Sr.- (akaWSCUC)
  - 12-18,000 word target (~50 to 75 pages)
What Does It Take to Convince You As A Visiting Team Member?

• “Levels” of Evidence
  • Preponderance
  • Clear and convincing
  • Beyond reasonable doubt

• ACCJC. *Guide to Evaluating & Improving Institutions*, July ‘15
  • Questions re application of the standards at the college
  • Distance Education in shades of gray
  • List of potential sources of evidence
  • Citations of effective practice
Sources of Evidence

The visiting team represents the Commission and is to validate the claims made by the college in the self-evaluation report.
Relevant

• Parse (diagram) the standard
• Turn the standard’s language into a question(s)
• Select evidence that is related to the standard
• Regarding the evidence you are citing, Ask
  • What is it supposed to be evidence of?
  • Why was it chosen over other possible sources?

Standard II.A.9
Verifiable

• Can the visiting team independently corroborate what was claimed?

Standard II. A. 14
Representative

• Is the evidence *typical* of conditions at the college?
• If the evidence is a sample, explain how it was developed.
• Evidence that is longitudinal helps demonstrate the underlying trends.
• If the evidence is qualitative (case examples or documents), multiple instances help indicate how typical the cases are.

Standard II.A.16
Cumulative

• Additional sources or methods for generating evidence help build credibility.
• Conclusions are more believable when they are independently corroborated from different sources (triangulation).
• Evidence that is mutually reinforcing in addressing a standard is helpful.

Standard III. A. 14
Actionable

- Good evidence helps the college take actions for improvement.
- Analysis and presentation of evidence needs to be appropriately disaggregated to look for underlying patterns of strength and weakness.
- Evidence must be reflectively analyzed and interpreted to get at implications for the college.

5.4 Requirements for Evidential Information
Reflection Questions

• Have you compared your evidence with the sources of evidence contained in the *Evaluation of Institutions Guide*?
• What is the point of the evidence,
• What story does it tell?
• Is the evidence from multiple sources?
• Is the evidence complete enough for an outsider to form a conclusion?
Pitfalls

• More evidence is not better, don’t try to measure and report on everything.
• Be only as precise as necessary, given the question in the language of the standard.
• Reflecting on evidence is a process that never ends.
  • Sometimes it prompts new lines of inquiry and fosters a culture of evidence.
  • But, the college needs to act on evidence whenever possible
Inputs vs. Process vs. Results

- Who we are (inputs) helps set context.
- Structures and processes employed are not as pertinent as...
- What the college *does* and *how well* it does in relation to its goals (mission) and standards of performance.
  - Think- so what?
  - Think- outcomes
  - Think- demonstrate intentionality and improvements

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<tr>
<th>1980s</th>
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<td>Inputs &amp; Reputation</td>
<td>Structure &amp; Processes</td>
<td>Results &amp; Continued Improvements</td>
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