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Educational Programs

EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

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PEER Review Process

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"The heart of the U.S. accreditation system
"is the accreditation team itself: a small
group of peers from other institutions who
come together to assess a college's
compliance with accreditation standards"
(McGuire, 2009, p. 29).

Think like a reviewer

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- ▶ Present the narrative in an organized format, following the order of each compliance component in the standard
 - ▶ Use key language from the standard so the reviewer knows what compliance component you are addressing in each section of narrative
- ▶ Remember to answer the question(s) asked
- ▶ Address all components of the standard

Think like a reviewer

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- ▶ Use your narrative to make your case for compliance
- ▶ Support your case with two types of evidence
 - ▶ Documents that describe how the institution operates: Bylaws, strategic plan, catalog, handbooks, manuals, policies, procedures, etc.
 - ▶ Documents that show how the institution operates in practice: Minutes, completed inventories, completed evaluations, completed audits, completed course approval forms, completed degree audits, copies of student complaints, assessment rubric results, survey results, redacted transcripts, etc.

Section 10: Educational policies, procedures, and practices

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Effective academic policies are:

- ▶ Developed in concert with appropriate input and participation of constituencies affected by policies (documentation of approval/approval process)
- ▶ Conform to **commonly accepted practices** and policies in higher education
- ▶ **Accurately portray** the institution's programs and services
- ▶ Are **disseminated** to those benefiting from such practices.
- ▶ Remember to include documentation of **implementation or enforcement** of policies (or include a statement attesting to the fact that a policy has never been implemented) for those standards requiring it

10.1: Academic policies

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The institution **publishes, implements,** and disseminates academic policies that adhere to principles of **good educational practice** and that **accurately represent the programs and services of the institution.**

- ▶ A description of the policy review and approval process (which is assumed to include a substantial faculty role) can provide helpful context for the reviewer
- ▶ Remember to document publication and dissemination of academic policies (i.e., academic catalog, faculty handbook, and/or student handbook).
- ▶ Be certain to include documentation of implementation for a sample of academic policies (e.g., academic standing).

10.2: Public information

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The institution makes **available to students and the public** current academic calendars, grading policies, cost of attendance, and refund policies.

- ▶ Note that "cost of attendance" was added as a component of this standard.
- ▶ Be certain to describe and document how the expectation of availability is met (Note: Some reviewers express concerns if information is difficult to locate.)

10.3: Archived information

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The institution ensures the **availability of archived official catalogs** (digital or print) with relevant information for course and degree requirements sufficient to serve former and returning students.

- ▶ Remember to provide documentation of how student can access these archived documents, regardless of their format (digital/print). Clear directions should be provided for accessing documents not available online.

10.4: Academic governance

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The institution (a) publishes and implements **policies on the authority of faculty in academic and governance matters**, (b) demonstrates that educational programs for which academic credit is awarded are approved consistent with institutional policy, and (c) places **primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty**.

- ▶ A description of faculty involvement in governance (i.e., standing committees, strategic planning, ad hoc committees, Faculty Senate) can provide helpful context for reviewers
- ▶ Remember to include documentation of publication and implementation of approval process for educational programs (which is assumed to include faculty and administrative approvals)
- ▶ Be certain to provide documentation of faculty role in areas such as curriculum committees, program review, program assessment, etc.

10.5: Admissions policies and practices 10

The institution **publishes admissions policies** consistent with its mission. **Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the practices, policies, and accreditation status of the institution.** The institution also ensures that **independent contractors or agents** used for recruiting purposes and for admission activities are **governed by the same principles and policies as institutional employees.**

- ▶ Remember to describe how admission standards align to mission, and document how admission policies are described and applied consistently (criteria for exceptions, exceptions are limited).
- ▶ Be certain to include all admissions policies (transfer, transient, non-degree, dual enrollment, audit, honors, conditional, etc.).
- ▶ If the institution does not use independent contractors/agents, please note that.

10.5: Admissions policies and practices 11

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- ▶ Note: "It is acceptable to reference accreditation by SACSCOC in flyers and other recruiting materials without the full statement found in the *Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure* policy. However, the full statement must appear in official publications such as the catalog, handbooks, or website pages where accreditation information is provided. Care must be taken in recruitment materials when referring to SACSCOC to ensure that accreditation status is not misrepresented, as discussed in the above-referenced policy." (*Resource Manual, under 14.1*)

10.5: Admissions policies and practices 12

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- ▶ Note: "The SACSCOC policy on *Advertising and Student Recruitment* contains the following statement regarding recruitment materials: All statements and representations are clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information is kept on file and readily available for review. In the case of programs that are awaiting SACSCOC's approval and inclusion in the institution's accreditation, the institution's communication with both external and internal constituencies clearly and consistently represent the program(s) as "pending approval by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges." (*Resource Manual, 10.5*)

10.6: Distance and correspondence education

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An institution that offers distance or correspondence education: (a) ensures that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit; (b) has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs; (c) ensures that students are notified, in writing at the time of registration or enrollment, of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

10.6: Distance and correspondence education

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► Note: "Part (b) is not referring solely to privacy protections that apply to all students (including distance education students) under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). The institution is expected to have specific policies to protect the privacy of students taking distance or correspondence courses. If these students utilize the same means of verification of identity as do all students, such as a username and password to access the learning management system, then the institution should explain how the institution protects the privacy of usernames and passwords in general." (*Resource Manual, 10.6*)

10.6: Distance and correspondence education

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► Note: "Part (c) may be complicated by circumstances where students must have an examination proctored, but the institution requires the student to find the site. In those cases, the institution has an obligation to make it clear to students in advance of registration or enrollment that there may be charges for this and that the student will need to find an appropriate site." (*Resource Manual, 10.6*)

Selected Educational Policies/Practices Standards

- 10.7: POLICIES FOR AWARDING CREDIT
- 10.8: EVALUATING & AWARDING ACADEMIC CREDIT
- 10.9: COOPERATIVE ACADEMIC ARRANGEMENTS

Compare and Contrast: An activity

10.7	10.8	10.9

10.7: Policies for Awarding Credit

(emphases added)

The **institution** publishes and implements policies for determining the **amount and level of credit awarded** for its courses, **regardless of format or mode of delivery**. These policies require **oversight by persons academically qualified** to make the necessary judgments. In educational programs not based on credit hours (e.g., direct assessment programs), the institution has a sound means for determining credit equivalencies.

10.7: Policies for awarding credit

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- ▶ This standard addresses **all credit originating with the institution**.
- ▶ Be certain to describe the policy and procedures for determining the **amount** and the **level** of credit and to document the process of implementation.
 - ▶ Remember to specify the role of individuals who are academically qualified
- ▶ Note: "This standard presumes the institution's credit hour policies include an acceptable definition of credit hours consistent with the SACSCOC policy on *Credit Hours*." (*Resource Manual*, 10.7)

10.8: Evaluating and Awarding Academic Credit (emphases added)

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The institution publishes **policies** for *evaluating, awarding, and accepting* credit **not originating from the institution**. The institution ensures **(a) the academic quality of any credit or coursework recorded on its transcript**, **(b) an approval process with oversight by persons academically qualified to make the necessary judgments**, and **(c) the credit awarded is comparable to a designated credit experience and is consistent with the institution's mission**.

10.8: Evaluating and awarding academic credit

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- ▶ This standard addresses **credit not originating with the institution** (i.e., transfer, prior learning assessment, credit by examination, Advanced Placement, etc.).
- ▶ Remember to describe the policies and procedures for ensuring academic quality and to document the process of implementation, including
 - ▶ Oversight by academic qualified individuals in the approval process
 - ▶ The process for evaluating equivalency of credit to credit originating at the institution

10.9: Cooperative Academic Arrangements (emphases added)

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The institution ensures the quality and integrity of the work recorded when an institution *transcripts* courses or credits as *its own* when offered through a **cooperative academic arrangement**. The institution maintains formal agreements between the parties involved and the institution *regularly evaluates* such agreements.

10.9: Cooperative academic arrangements

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- ▶ This standard addresses *credit not originating with the institution and offered through a cooperative academic arrangement, but transcribed as the institution's own credit.*
- ▶ Remember to include both *domestic and international* cooperative academic arrangements where instruction by a partner is transcribed as institutional credit.
- ▶ Examples of agreements covered by this standard typically include:
 - ▶ Geographic or denominational consortia
 - ▶ Agreements involving joint and dual academic awards
 - ▶ Statewide distance education agreements
 - ▶ Agreements with international institutions
 - ▶ Contractual instruction

10.9: Cooperative academic arrangements

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- ▶ The agreement and institutional practices should have *mechanisms to ensure the quality and the integrity.*
 - ▶ Be certain to include documentation of signed agreements that are reviewed regularly.

10.7, 10.8, 10.9, and Substantive Change

▶ An applied activity



Questions?


