Accreditation Standards
Adopted June 2014

Standard I:[2] Mission, Academic Quality[3] and Institutional Effectiveness, and Integrity

The institution demonstrates strong commitment to a mission that emphasizes student learning and student achievement. Using analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, the institution continuously and systematically evaluates, plans, implements, and improves the quality of its educational programs and services. The institution demonstrates integrity in all policies, actions, and communication. The administration, faculty, staff, and governing board members act honestly, ethically, and fairly in the performance of their duties.

A. Mission

1. The mission describes the institution's broad educational purposes, its intended student population, the types of degrees and other credentials it offers, and its commitment to student learning[4] and student achievement.[5] (ER 6)[6]

   - *What does the institution's mission statement say about its educational purposes? Are the purposes appropriate to an institution of higher learning?*

   - *How does the mission statement inform institutional planning?*

   - *Who are the intended students for the courses offered in DE/CE format? Are they similar to or different from students studying in traditional learning mode?*

   - QFE: *Is the institution reaching all segments of its intended student population; are any groups of students underrepresented; and how can the institution increase their participation and success?*

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[2] Each enumerated statement is an ACCJC accreditation standard (e.g., I.A.1, II.B.4, and so on). The standards are organized by subject matter into four chapters which are entitled Standard I, Standard II, Standard III, and Standard IV. The chapters are further divided by headings to help identify related groups of standards.

[3] Glossary- Academic Quality: A way of describing how well the learning opportunities, instruction, support, services, environment, resource utilization and operations of a college result in student learning and student achievement of their educational goals. The Accreditation Standards, collectively, are factors in determining academic quality in the context of institutional mission.

[4] Glossary- Student Learning: Competencies in skill and knowledge gained by students who are at the institution. The knowledge and competencies are expressed for segments of study or activity through measurable learning outcomes at the institutional, program, degree, and course levels.

[5] Glossary- Student Achievement: Student attainment that can be measured at defined points of completion, including successful course, certificate and degree completion, licensure examination passage, post-program employment, and other similar elements.

[6] Institutions that have achieved accreditation are expected to include in their Institutional Self Evaluation Report information demonstrating that they continue to meet the eligibility requirements. Accredited institutions must separately address Eligibility Requirements 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 in the Institutional Self Evaluation Report. The remaining Eligibility Requirements will be addressed in the institution's response to the relevant sections of the Accreditation Standards. The relevant sections of the Accreditation Standards are so noted by an (ER___) designation.

> **Effective Practices**
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> Institutional leaders, including board members and faculty, are continuously engaged in fulfilling the institutional mission, which focuses on the success of students pursuing their educational goals.
>
> Grounded by the mission, a sustained focus on student learning and achievement is practiced by all stakeholders and demonstrably informs the development of policies, procedures, and practices.

2. The institution uses data to determine how effectively it is accomplishing its mission, and whether the mission directs institutional priorities in meeting the educational needs of students.

   - *What data does the institution use to determine whether or not it is accomplishing its mission? What institutional processes does the institution use to evaluate the effectiveness and success of its mission?* (Federal Regulation)

   > - QFE: *Has the institution identified groups of students whose educational needs are not currently being served or not being served adequately; how can the institution better serve these students?*

   > **Effective Practices**
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   > A culture of evidence and inquiry is pervasive in the institution, including cohort tracking, using disaggregated data and strong support from the institutional research unit.

3. The institution's programs and services are aligned with its mission. The mission guides institutional decision-making, planning, and resource allocation and informs institutional goals for student learning and achievement.

   - *How does the mission statement guide planning and decision making? To what extent is the mission statement central to the choices the college makes?*

   - *Has the institution considered in consultation with its key constituents if and how DE/CE is congruent with the mission? Does the mission include any statements related to its commitment to DE/CE?*

4. The institution articulates its mission in a widely published statement approved by the governing board. The mission statement is periodically reviewed and updated as necessary. (ER 6)

   - *When was the current mission statement approved by the governing board?*

   - *Has the mission been reviewed to reflect the commitment to DE/CE and what was the rationale for the changes to the statement?*

B. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness
Academic Quality

1. The institution demonstrates a sustained, substantive and collegial dialog about student outcomes, student equity, academic quality, institutional effectiveness, and continuous improvement of student learning and achievement.

   - *How has the college structured its dialog?*

   - *When, how, and about what subjects has the college engaged in dialog? What impact has the dialog had on student learning?*

   - *Does the dialog lead to a collective understanding of the meaning of evidence, data, and research used in evaluation of student learning?*

   - *What parties are involved in the institution's dialog about the continuous improvement of student learning through DE/CE mode and how it compares with student learning in traditional programs?*

   - QFE: In what ways can the institution increase broad and continuous faculty, staff, student, and community engagement and collaboration in support of student success?

   > **Effective Practices**
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   > The institution demonstrates broad and continuous faculty, staff, student, and community engagement and collaboration in support of student success.
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   > A sense of urgency drives a shared vision and communication around a focus on student learning and achievement with internal and external stakeholders.

2. The institution defines and assesses student learning outcomes for all instructional programs and student and learning support services. (ER 11)

   - *What established policies and institutional processes guide the development and evaluation of courses, programs, certificates, and degrees? What is the role of faculty?*

   - *Does the institution use disaggregated data for analysis of student learning?*

   - *Are student learning outcomes and assessments established for each course, program, certificate, and degree (including non-credit)?*

   - *How are courses, programs, certificates, and degrees evaluated? How often? What are the results of the evaluations?*

   - *What improvements to courses, programs, certificates, and degrees have occurred as a result of evaluation?*

   - *How does the institution provide for systematic and regular review of its student and learning support services? How are the results used?*

   - *What established policies and institutional processes guide the development and evaluation of courses and programs offered in DE/CE mode? Are they different from the policies and institutional processes that guide the development and evaluation of courses offered in traditional mode?*

- *What is the role of faculty and how is discipline expertise or teaching knowledge and expertise in the field of DE/CE used for establishing quality for these courses?*

- *What improvements to DE/CE courses and programs have occurred as a result of evaluation?*

3. The institution establishes institution-set standards[7] for student achievement, appropriate to its mission, assesses how well it is achieving them in pursuit of continuous improvement, and publishes this information. (ER 11)

   - *What criteria and processes does the college use to determine its priorities and set minimum expectations (institution-set standards) for student achievement, including required expectations of performance for course completion, job placement rates, and licensure examination passage rates? (Federal Regulation)*

   - *Is there broad-based understanding of the priorities and the processes to implement strategies to achieve the desired outcomes?*

   - *To what extent does the college achieve its standards? (Federal Regulation)*

   - *How does the college use accreditation annual report data to assess performance against the institution-set standards?*

   - *If an institution does not meet its own standards, what plans are developed and implemented to enable it to reach these standards? (Federal Regulation)*

   - *Has the college defined specific goals (institution-set standards) and objectives for the effectiveness of its DE/CE activities? How are these goals and objectives defined and communicated?*

   - *What data and/or evidence are used to communicate and analyze institution-set standards relevant to DE/CE?*

4. The institution uses assessment data and organizes its institutional processes to support student learning and student achievement.

   - *How is assessment data incorporated into college planning to improve student learning and achievement? (Federal Regulation)*

   - *Are the data used for assessment and analysis disaggregated to reflect factors of difference among students?*

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[7] Glossary- Institution-Set Standards: Performance metrics and measures set by institutions for student achievement, both in individual programs and for institution-wide student achievement. (A useful example of Institution-Set Standards could be the three-year averages of student performance metrics and performance targets set above the averages.) Both the definition and the level of expected performance are appropriate for assessing achievement of institutional mission, for determining actions of improvement, and for analyzing institutional results in the context of higher education. Institutions assess student performance against locally set standards in order to determine institutional effectiveness and academic quality and to inform planning and action for continuous improvement.

Institutional Effectiveness

5.   The institution assesses accomplishment of its mission through program review and evaluation of goals and objectives, student learning outcomes, and student achievement. Quantitative and qualitative data are disaggregated for analysis by program type and mode of delivery.

- *Does the college have a program review process in place? Is it cyclical, i.e., does it incorporate systematic, ongoing evaluation of programs and services using data on student learning and achievement, improvement planning, implementation, and re-evaluation? How does college budgeting of resources follow planning? How is planning integrated?*

- *To what extent are institutional data and evidence available and used for program review?*

- *Does the college have separate processes for the planning, approval, evaluation, and review of courses offered in DE/CE mode, or are the processes similar to those for courses offered in traditional face-to-face mode? How are these processes integrated into the college's overall planning process?*

6.   The institution disaggregates and analyzes learning outcomes and achievement for subpopulations of students. When the institution identifies performance gaps, it implements strategies, which may include allocation or reallocation of human, fiscal and other resources, to mitigate those gaps and evaluates the efficacy of those strategies.

- *Does the institution identify significant trends among subpopulations of students and interpret their meaning?*

- *Has the institution set performance expectations (key performance indicators) for the subpopulations?*

- *How does it judge its achievement of the target outcomes?*

- *Is the institution performance satisfactory?*

- *What changes have been made or are planned as a result of the analysis of the data?*

- QFE: *What groups or subpopulations at the college need to be identified; how is information on their success/challenges determined?*

- QFE: *What strategies are needed to mitigate performance gaps among these groups of students?*

Effective Practices
An equity agenda is integrated with efforts to improve student learning and achievement.

7. The institution regularly evaluates its policies and practices across all areas of the institution, including instructional programs, student and learning support services, resource management, and governance processes to assure their effectiveness in supporting academic quality and accomplishment of mission.

    - *What processes does the institution use to assess the effectiveness of its cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, and re-evaluation?*

    - *How effective are the college planning processes for fostering improvement?*

    - *What mechanisms does the institution use to gather evidence about the effectiveness of DE/CE learning programs and related student and learning support services?*

8. The institution broadly communicates the results of all of its assessment and evaluation activities so that the institution has a shared understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and sets appropriate priorities.

    - *What mechanisms exist for participation in and communication about college planning and evaluation?*

9. The institution engages in continuous, broad based, systematic evaluation and planning. The institution integrates program review, planning, and resource allocation into a comprehensive process that leads to accomplishment of its mission and improvement of institutional effectiveness and academic quality. Institutional planning addresses short- and long-range needs for educational programs and services and for human, physical, technology, and financial resources. (ER 19)

    - *What mechanisms does the institution use to gather evidence about the effectiveness of programs and services?*

    - *How effectively do evaluation processes and results contribute to improvement in programs and services?*

    - *Are the assessment data collected for DE/CE different from data collected for traditional face-to-face education? What is the rationale? What types of assessment data does the college collect on learning programs and support services offered in DE/CE format?*

    - QFE: *What barriers exist at the institution that need to be overcome to enable integrated evaluation, planning, resource allocation, and re-evaluation to improve academic quality and student learning and achievement?*

Effective Practices

Planning and budgeting, including reallocation of resources, are aligned with the vision, priorities, and strategies defined for student success at the institution.

The institution has an agenda for student success that integrates all significant initiatives, including legislated programs, grants, strategic, planning, and accreditation.

C. Institutional Integrity[8]

1. The institution assures the clarity, accuracy, and integrity of information provided to students and prospective students, personnel, and all persons or organizations related to its mission statement, learning outcomes, educational programs, and student support services. The institution gives accurate information to students and the public about its accreditation status with all of its accreditors. (ER 20)

   - *How does the institution conduct regular review of its policies and practices regarding publications to ensure their integrity? Are electronic representations of the institution regularly reviewed?*

   - *Does the institution provide information on student achievement to the public? Is that information accurate and current?*

   - *Through what means does the institution represent itself about its DE/CE programs? How are these means evaluated? Are they effective in reaching the potential students for DE/CE programs? How does the institution know that they are effective?*

   - *Does the institution provide information to the public on student achievement in DE/CE programs?*

2. The institution provides a print or online catalog for students and prospective students with precise, accurate, and current information on all facts, requirements, policies, and procedures listed in the "Catalog Requirements" (see endnote). (ER 20)

   - *Is the catalog provided in both printed and electronic format?*

   - *How does the institution assure that the catalog presents accurate, current, and detailed information to the public about its programs, locations, and policies? (Federal Regulation)*

   - *How does the institution address issues of academic freedom, student financial aid, and available learning resources as they apply to DE/CE? Are the means applied differently from traditional education? What is the rationale?*

   - *How does the catalog describe the instructional delivery applied in the DE/CE courses, programs, and degree offerings? How does the catalog present the interaction between faculty and students and the accessibility of faculty and staff to students?*

3. The institution uses documented assessment of student learning and evaluation of student achievement to communicate matters of academic quality to appropriate constituencies, including current and prospective students and the public. (ER 19)

   - *What assessment data does the college collect?*

   - *By what means does the college make public its data and analyses internally and externally?*

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[8] Glossary- Institutional Integrity: Concept of consistent and ethical actions, values, methods, measures, principles, expectations, and outcomes, as defined by institutions; and of clear, accurate, and current information available to the college community and public.

4. The institution describes its certificates and degrees in terms of their purpose, content, course requirements, and expected learning outcomes.

- *How does the institution assure that information about its programs is clear and accurate? Are degrees and certificates clearly described? Are student learning outcomes included in descriptions of courses and programs?*

- *How does the institution verify that students receive a course syllabus that includes student learning outcomes?*

- *How does the college verify that individual sections of courses adhere to the course learning outcomes*

- *How do students enrolled in DE/CE programs receive information about the institution's degrees and certificates and in what format is the information available for reference? How does the institution verify that DE/CE students receive a course syllabus that includes student learning outcomes, and that individual sections of courses adhere to the course objectives/learning outcomes? (Federal Regulation)*

5. The institution regularly reviews institutional policies, procedures, and publications to assure integrity in all representations of its mission, programs, and services.

- *What process does the institution use to evaluate its policies, procedures, and publications to ensure their integrity? Are the results communicated within the campus community? (Federal Regulation)*

6. The institution accurately informs current and prospective students regarding the total cost of education, including tuition, fees, and other required expenses, including textbooks, and other instructional materials.

- *How does the institution publish information on the total cost of education? (Federal Regulation)*

7. In order to assure institutional and academic integrity, the institution uses and publishes governing board policies on academic freedom and responsibility. These policies make clear the institution's commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, and its support for an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom exists for all constituencies, including faculty and students. (ER 13)

- *How is the policy on academic freedom implemented and monitored in DE/CE courses and programs?*

8. The institution establishes and publishes clear policies and procedures that promote honesty, responsibility and academic integrity. These policies apply to all constituencies and include specifics relative to each, including student behavior, academic honesty and the consequences for dishonesty.

- *What mechanism does the institution have for informing and enforcing its policies on academic honesty for students and faculty?*

- *Do board-approved policies on student academic honesty exist and are they made public?*

- *Does the institution have any prevention strategies in place to promote student verification? Are faculty members encouraged to promote student verification in the design of DE/CE courses? Is academic integrity including student verification covered in staff training and development? (For practices on student verification refer to WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies at: http://wcet.wiche.edu/wcet/docs/cigs/studentauthentication/BestPractices.pdf (Federal Regulation)*

9. Faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline. They present data and information fairly and objectively.

   - *How does the college communicate its expectation that faculty distinguish between personal conviction and professionally accepted views in a discipline? What mechanisms does the college have for determining how effectively it is meeting this expectation?*

10. Institutions that require conformity to specific codes of conduct of staff, faculty, administrators, or students, or that seek to instill specific beliefs or world views, give clear prior notice of such policies, including statements in the catalog and/or appropriate faculty and student handbooks.

    - *How are requirements of conformity to codes of conduct communicated?*

    - *If a college seeks to instill specific beliefs or world views, what policies does it have in place to detail these goals? How are the policies communicated to appropriate constituencies and carried out?*

11. Institutions operating in foreign locations operate in conformity with the Standards and applicable Commission policies for all students. Institutions must have authorization from the Commission to operate in a foreign location.

    - *How well do curricula offered in foreign locations to non-U.S. students conform to the specifications of the Commission's "Policy on Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals?"*

    - *Does the institution promote its distance education in foreign locations? How does the promotion of these activities overseas align with the institution's mission and the objectives for its DE?*

    - *Does the institution enroll students who do not reside in the U.S. into programs? How does it ensure that the foreign students appropriately comply with the admission requirements for the programs? Are all students admitted to the programs recognized as U.S. students?*

12. The institution agrees to comply with Eligibility Requirements, Accreditation Standards, Commission policies, guidelines, and requirements for public disclosure, institutional reporting, team visits, and prior approval of substantive changes. When directed to act by the Commission, the institution responds to meet requirements within a time period set by the Commission. It discloses information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. (ER 21)

- *Does the institution communicate matters of educational quality and institutional effectiveness to the public? Is the communication accurate? (Federal Regulation)*

13. The institution advocates and demonstrates honesty and integrity in its relationships with external agencies, including compliance with regulations and statutes. It describes itself in consistent terms to all of its accrediting agencies and communicates any changes in its accredited status to the Commission, students, and the public. (ER 21)

    - *What does documentation of the institution's past history with external agencies demonstrate about integrity in its relationship with those agencies? Has it responded expeditiously and honestly to recommendations or cited issues, are there citations indicating difficulty, etc.? (Federal Regulation)*

    - *What is the institution's evidence of compliance with the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) regulations? (Federal Regulation)*

14. The institution ensures that its commitments to high quality education, student achievement and student learning are paramount to other objectives such as generating financial returns for investors, contributing to a related or parent organization, or supporting external interests.

    - *Do the institution's policies and practices demonstrate that delivering high quality education is paramount to other objectives?*

    - *How are the institution's priorities documented?*

Sources of Evidence: Examples for Standard I

Listed below are examples of potential sources of evidence for Standard I. There may be many other sources relevant to each college's unique mission that institutions should provide and teams should consider.

Standard I: Mission, Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness, and Integrity

A. Mission
- ☐ Evidence that analysis of how the institutional mission and goals are linked to the needs of the student population has taken place
- ☐ Evidence of analysis of how the mission statement is developed, approved and communicated to all stakeholders
- ☐ Evidence of analysis of the process used for the periodic review of the institution's mission; evidence that the process is inclusive
- ☐ Evidence that the mission statement provides the preconditions for setting institutional goals
- ☐ Evidence of analysis of how the cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, implementation, and re-evaluation relates to the mission and is used for institutional improvement
- ☐ Evidence of analysis of how the institution's mission statement is developed, approved, and communicated to all stakeholders taking the institution's commitment to DE/CE into consideration
- ☐ Evidence of the process used for identifying the students interested in enrolling in DE/CE
- ☐ Evidence of analysis of the relevance of DE/CE programs and services for the community
- ☐ List of the institution's DE/CE courses and programs

B. Assuring Academic Quality and Institutional Effectiveness
- ☐ Evidence that the institution has developed processes by which continuous dialogue about both student learning and institutional processes can take place
- ☐ Evidence of institution-set standards and analysis of results for improvement
- ☐ Evidence of broad-based participation in the dialogue
- ☐ Evidence that clearly stated, measurable goals and objectives guide the college community in making decisions regarding planning and allocation of resources as well as curriculum and program development
- ☐ Written, current institutional plans that describe how the institution will achieve its goals
- ☐ Evidence that the processes used in planning and institutional improvement are communicated and they provide the means by which the college community can participate in decision-making
- ☐ Evidence that goals are developed with the knowledge and understanding of the college community
- ☐ Evidence there exists a current cycle in which evaluation results are utilized in integrating planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation
- ☐ Evidence that data is both quantitative and qualitative

- ☐ Evidence that well-defined, decision-making processes and authority facilitate planning and institutional effectiveness
- ☐ Evidence of regular and systematic assessment of the effectiveness of all institutional services and processes
- ☐ Evidence that the results of evaluations are disseminated to and understood by the college community
- ☐ Evidence that results of regular and systematic assessments are used for institutional improvement
- ☐ Evidence of current, systematic program reviews and use of results
- ☐ Evidence that program review processes are systematically evaluated
- ☐ Evidence of institutional dialog about the continuous improvement of student learning in DE/CE mode
- ☐ Evidence that clearly stated and measurable goals and objectives guide the college community in making decisions regarding its priorities related to DE/CE
- ☐ Evidence of evaluation of progress on the achievement of goals and objectives related to DE/CE
- ☐ List of all DE/CE courses/programs
- ☐ Evidence of quantitative and qualitative data that support the analysis of achievement of goals and objectives for DE/CE
- ☐ Evidence of mechanisms for allocation of resources to plans for DE/CE
- ☐ Evidence of periodic and systematic assessment of the effectiveness of DE/CE
- ☐ Evidence that the assessment data is effectively communicated to the appropriate constituencies
- ☐ Evidence of current reviews of programs and support services including library services related to DE/CE and examples of improvements

C. Institutional Integrity
- ☐ Evidence that institutional policies are regularly reviewed to ensure integrity
- ☐ Evidence of a student authentication process to ensure the student enrolled in an online course is the same student that participates, completes the course, and receives the credit
- ☐ Evidence the institution maintains a file of student complaints/grievances
- ☐ Evidence of policies and practices related to identification of students enrolled in DE/CE courses