

**2028 SACSCOC Curriculum Design and Educational Policies and Practice Working Group
Meeting
July 7, 2026, 3:00 – 4:00 pm
Microsoft Teams**

Attendees: Michael Biewer, Mark Cooper, Mary Beth Goodrich, Raúl Hinojosa, Jr., Poonam Kumar, Jennifer McDowell, William (Bill) Nichols, Melissa Ray, Melanie Spence, Joshua Summers, Mark Thouin, Vy Trang, Eric Van Leeuwen, Mary Jo Venetis, Ashley Spaulding

Absent: Chandramallika Basak, Lev Gelb, Juan González, Ingrid London, Shilyh Warren

Meeting Notes

- **Assignment and Discussion of SACSCOC Principles:** Eric Van Leeuwen, Dr. Raúl Hinojosa, Jennifer McDowell, Dr. Mary Jo Venetis, and other participants discussed the assignment of SACSCOC Principles to various team members, clarified responsibilities, and addressed questions about compliance, with input from representatives of the Council for Undergraduate Education (CUE), Council on Graduate Education (Graduate Council), and Committee on Educational Policy (CEP).
 - o **Program Content Responsibility:** Eric Van Leeuwen explained that responsibility for the 'program content' Principle would fall to their office in Curricular Services, as they handle new program proposals and submissions to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) before SACSCOC review. Dr. Hinojosa added that representatives from CUE and Graduate Council would also contribute information, and the group agreed to draft the response collaboratively.
 - o **Tracking Meeting Minutes:** Dr. Venetis clarified that meeting minutes from CUE, Graduate Council, and CEP would be kept as evidence. The group discussed the impact of the Academic Senate's closure due to SB27 and the need to explain this in documentation.
 - o **Mission Statement Stability:** Dr. Hinojosa informed the group that, despite the upcoming five-year review, no changes to the University's mission statement were anticipated, which would be important for proposals referencing mission alignment.
 - o **Assignment of Principle Leads:** Jennifer McDowell asked about assignment for Principle 9.1, and Eric Van Leeuwen volunteered to lead, with Dr. Venetis also involved. The group agreed to include representatives from CUE, Graduate Council, and CEP, and Dr. Lev Gelb was mentioned as a committee member.
- **Program Length and Fast Track Policy Compliance:** Jennifer McDowell, Dr. Melanie Spence, Dr. Hinojosa, Dr. Mark Thouin, Dr. Joshua Summers, and others discussed the complexities of program length, especially regarding Fast Track programs, equivalency explanations, and the need to align practice with policy, with input from multiple schools and councils.
 - o **Semester Credit Hour Policy:** Jennifer McDowell explained the need to provide explanations for equivalencies when using units other than semester credit hours, referencing the University's credit hour policy. Dr. Spence clarified confusion about whether any programs used units other than semester hours, and the group confirmed adherence to the policy.

- o **Fast Track Program Practices:** Eric Van Leeuwen and Dr. Hinojosa discussed the need to address specific Fast Track programs, with Dr. Hinojosa noting that each school has its own policies and admissions requirements for Fast Track. Jennifer McDowell mentioned a planned reset in the fall to ensure Fast Track websites are updated.
 - o **Credit Hour Reductions and Minimum Requirements:** Dr. Thouin raised concerns about master's programs reducing credit hours from 36 to 30 and the impact on the 150-hour minimum for combined undergraduate and graduate degrees. Dr. Venetis clarified that as long as the 150-hour minimum is met, variations are acceptable, but rationales must be provided if requirements fall below this threshold.
 - o **Policy vs. Practice Alignment:** Dr. Summers questioned the distinction between policy and practice, and Dr. Hinojosa emphasized the importance of documenting practices, ensuring they do not violate policy, and demonstrating compliance with SACSCOC Principles. The group discussed the need for clear explanations when practices differ from policy.
 - o **Historical Review and Outreach:** Dr. Hinojosa and Dr. Venetis noted the history of close review of Fast Track programs since 2007, stressing the importance of thorough documentation and outreach to educate faculty and schools about relevant policies and practices.
- **General Education Requirements and Core Curriculum Changes:** Eric Van Leeuwen, Dr. William Nichols, Dr. Mark Cooper, Dr. Hinojosa, and others discussed the institution's general education requirements, ongoing core curriculum review, anticipated legislative changes, and the need to coordinate with core curriculum chairs and CUE representatives.
 - o **Core Curriculum Review:** Eric Van Leeuwen and Dr. Nichols are leading a comprehensive core review in response to SB37, with Dr. Chandramallika Basak (core curriculum chair) and CUE members expected to participate. The review will inform documentation of general education requirements.
 - o **State Compliance and Anticipated Changes:** Dr. Hinojosa explained that while state requirements are not currently changing, legislative sessions may introduce changes, requiring ongoing updates to documentation until the September 2027 deadline.
 - o **Breadth and Rationale of General Education:** Eric Van Leeuwen described the need to ensure the general education component meets Texas core standards, provides breadth of knowledge, and includes courses from specified areas, with local compliance documented alongside state requirements.
 - o **Collaboration with Other Institutions:** Eric Van Leeuwen and Dr. Hinojosa noted that UT Austin is undergoing reaffirmation simultaneously, allowing for potential collaboration, though UT Austin's process may be more complex.
 - o **Core Assessment Responsibility:** Dr. Melissa Ray's office was identified as responsible for core assessment, ensuring proper documentation and compliance.
- **Admissions Policies and Practices Documentation:** Eric Van Leeuwen, Dr. Hinojosa, Dr. Venetis and others discussed the documentation of admissions policies, decentralized graduate admissions, involvement of communication and marketing, and the need for comprehensive evidence from multiple offices.
 - o **Undergraduate and Graduate Admissions:** Eric Van Leeuwen identified Ingrid London's office as the lead in identifying admissions policy documentation, with Dr. Hinojosa noting the inclusion of Graduate Council and the Dean of Graduate Education (Dr. Juan González) for decentralized graduate admissions.

- o **Recruitment Materials and Independent Contractors:** Eric Van Leeuwen emphasized the need to ensure recruitment materials and presentations are consistent with admissions policies, and that independent contractors or agents are governed by the same Principles.
 - **Collaboration with Communication and Marketing:** Dr. Venetis discussed including recruiting brochures and fact sheets from the Office of Communication and Marketing, with Dr. Venetis serving as the Curricular Services liaison.
 - o **GRE and Historical Knowledge:** Eric Van Leeuwen mentioned his team's role in bridging admissions requirements, such as the GRE, and maintaining historical knowledge as Dr. González retires at the end of August 2026.
- **Distance and Correspondence Education Compliance:** Dr. Cooper, Eric Van Leeuwen, Dr. Poonam Kumar, Dr. Ray, Mary Beth Goodrich, Dr. Hinojosa, and others discussed compliance with distance and correspondence education standards, including student identity verification, privacy protection, and the involvement of the Office of Information Technology (OIT) and the Registrar's Office.
 - o **Student Identity Verification Procedures:** Dr. Cooper volunteered to lead documentation for distance education, noting the need to research student identity verification processes, including netID assignment and authentication, and requested help from others.
 - o **Coverage of Global and Executive Programs:** Dr. Cooper highlighted the need to address not only traditional undergraduate and graduate programs but also Global UTD, executive education, and extension programs, which may have different procedures.
 - o **OIT and Registrar Involvement:** Dr. Hinojosa identified Stephanie McCane in OIT as a key contact for gathering information, and Dr. Cooper suggested including Registrar staff to ensure documentation of comparable procedures for distance and in-person programs.
 - o **Cross-Referencing Documentation:** Dr. Hinojosa and Dr. Venetis discussed cross-referencing narratives and documentation across Principles, using shared evidence where applicable.
 - o **Faculty-Led Study Abroad and Cooperative Agreements:** Dr. Summers, Dr. Nichols, Dr. Kumar, Dr. Hinojosa, and Mary Beth Goodrich clarified that faculty-led study abroad programs and cooperative agreements are not considered distance education under SACSCOC Principles and thus do not require documentation in this context.
- **Evidence Collection and Documentation Process:** Vy Trang, Dr. Hinojosa, Eric Van Leeuwen, Mary Beth Goodrich, Dr. Cooper, and others discussed the process for collecting, uploading, and approving evidence for SACSCOC compliance, including the development of a web page repository, guidance on documentation levels, and collaboration tools.
 - o **Web Page Repository Development:** Vy Trang reported working with Muhammad McIntee-Masud (Web Applications Technology – WAT) to build a webpage for uploading documents directly into a repository, tagging them by working group and Principle number(s), with a demonstration expected soon.
 - o **Evidence Approval and Management:** Dr. Hinojosa explained that evidence would be uploaded to the DOX system, where items would be approved for use and linked for off-campus reviewers, ensuring compliance with technology requirements.
 - o **Guidance on Documentation Level:** Dr. Hinojosa and Mary Beth Goodrich discussed whether documentation should be at the course or program level, with Dr. Hinojosa advising following the question's requirements.

- o **Sample Documentation and Examples:** Dr. Hinojosa recommended using the 'questions to consider' and 'sample documentation' sections as starting points, providing examples and evidence to demonstrate compliance, and managing the narrative to avoid irrelevant information.
 - o **Collaboration Tools and Preferences:** Dr. Hinojosa offered options for collaboration, including Word docs, Teams channels, and Box folders, deferring to group preferences and providing support for setup. Dr. Cooper volunteered to start a OneDrive document for Principle 10.6, and October 23 was set as the first draft narrative deadline.
- **Selection and Use of Representative Examples:** Dr. Cooper, Dr. Hinojosa, Dr. Venetis, and Mary Beth Goodrich discussed the importance of selecting representative examples for documentation, avoiding sensitive information, and ensuring examples demonstrate policy compliance.
 - o **Choosing Examples:** Dr. Cooper explained the art of selecting examples that are general enough to demonstrate policy compliance across programs.
 - o **Avoiding Sensitive Information:** Dr. Venetis advised against including student ID or sensitive information, recommending the use of anonymized examples and providing rationale only when requirements are not met.
 - o **Sample Selection Guidance:** Dr. Venetis emphasized answering questions at the requested level (institutional, program, or course) and providing only necessary samples or documentation as noted by the SACSCOC Resource Manual.
- **Access to Previous Accreditation Reports:** Dr. Hinojosa, Eric Van Leeuwen, and Dr. Spence discussed the availability of previous SACSCOC accreditation reports, noting changes in Principles and numbering schemes, and advising caution when referencing past documentation.
 - o **Accessing Previous Reports:** Dr. Hinojosa provided a link to the current SACSCOC website that includes previous accreditation efforts, noting that reports since 2018 and the 2024 Fifth-Year report are available for review.
 - o **Caveats on Using Past Documentation:** Dr. Hinojosa and Eric Van Leeuwen cautioned that Principles and documentation requirements have changed since previous reports, and numbering schemes differ, so past examples may not directly apply to current requirements.
- **Next Steps and Meeting Goals:** Dr. Hinojosa, Mary Beth Goodrich, Dr. Cooper, Dr. Kumar, and Eric Van Leeuwen discussed next steps, including starting document drafts, collaboration preferences, and the timeline for merging work into a draft narrative by October 23.
 - o **Draft Narrative Timeline:** Dr. Hinojosa confirmed that the goal is to have a merged draft narrative by October 23, with additional time allowed for unfinished sections.
 - o **Collaboration Preferences:** Dr. Hinojosa offered options for document collaboration, including Word docs, Teams channels, and Box folders, and deferred to group preferences for setup.
 - o **Document Seeding:** Dr. Cooper volunteered to start a OneDrive document for Principle 10.6.

Follow-up tasks:

- **Evidence Collection System:** Demonstrate the new webpage for document uploads and provide instructions for uploading evidence at the next meeting. (Vy Trang, Dr. Hinojosa)

- **Fast Track Program Documentation:** Gather and upload evidence and documentation related to Fast Track program policies and practices, ensuring input from CEP, Graduate Council, and CUE representatives. (Working Group)
- **General Education Curriculum Changes:** Monitor and update documentation on general education/core curriculum requirements as legislative changes occur, ensuring ongoing compliance up to the September 2027 deadline. (Eric Van Leeuwen, Dr. Nichols, Dr. Basak, Dr. Adam Chandler, Dr. Biewer)
- **Distance Education Authentication Procedures:** Research and document current procedures for student authentication and privacy protection in distance and correspondence education, including input from OIT and relevant program leads. (Dr. Cooper, Dr. Kumar, Dr. Ray, Mary Beth Goodrich, Stephanie McCane from OIT)
- **Registrar Involvement in Distance Education Review:** Add a representative from the Registrar's Office to the Principle 14.3 writing team to address institutional processes for approving online modalities and ensure equivalency with in-person programs. (Dr. Hinojosa)
- **Documentation Guidance:** Provide examples or guidance on the preferred format and level of detail for documentation to be collected and uploaded by team members. (Dr. Hinojosa, Eric Van Leeuwen)
- **Draft Narrative Preparation:** Begin drafting responses to assigned Principles, identifying any policy or practice gaps, and prepare to merge group contributions into a draft narrative by October 23rd. (Working Group)

Assigned Principles

- [Principle 9.1 Program content](#): Eric Van Leeuwen, Dr. Venetis (Curricular Services); representatives from CUE, Graduate Council, and CEP
- [Principle 9.2 Program length](#): Jennifer McDowell, Dr. Nichols, representatives from CUE, Graduate Council, and CEP
- [Principle 9.3 General education requirements](#): Dr. Nichols, Eric Van Leeuwen/Curricular Services, Committee on Core Curriculum, CUE/ADUs, Dr. Ray/OISDS
- [Principle 10.5 Admission policies and practices](#): Eric Van Leeuwen, Ingrid London/Office of Enrollment and Admissions, Graduate Council, Office of Graduate Education, CEP, Office of Communications and Marketing (recruitment materials – Venetis)
- [Principle 10.6 Distance and correspondence education](#): Dr. Cooper, Dr. Kuman, Dr. Ray, Mary Beth Goodrich, Stephanie McCane (OIT)
- [14.3 Comprehensive institutional review](#): Curricular Services, Registrar's Office and representatives from Principle 10.6

Prior Accreditation Efforts for [2018 Reaffirmation](#) and [2024 Fifth-Year Interim Report](#)

Caution: Since 2018, the Principles (see [crosswalk](#)) and our institution have changed so we need to keep that in mind as we read those. There has been less change since the 2024 Fifth-Year Interim Report.