2.7.2 The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. *(Program content)*

Rationale and Notes

All programs offered by the institution are directly connected to its mission and to fields of study appropriate to higher education. In order to guide students through the continuous process of learning, the content of the program demands increasing levels of integration of knowledge. Coherence is a critical component of a program and should demonstrate an appropriate sequencing of courses, not a mere bundling of credits, so that student learning is progressively more advanced in terms of assignments and scholarship required and demonstrates progressive advancement in a field of study that allows students to integrate knowledge and grow in critical skills.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- What evidence exists that the institution offers degree programs consistent with its stated mission?
- How does the institution ensure that a representative sample of its degree programs demonstrates coherence in sequencing, increasing complexity, and linkages between and among program components?
- How does the institution demonstrate that its programs are appropriate to higher education?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable
- College/university publications listing courses required in each program offered, providing course descriptions, and course and program prerequisites

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Process for ensuring the coherence of programs and compatibility with the mission of the institution
- Information regarding degree requirements, residency requirements, and other experiences as part of a program
- Comparative data with similar peer institutions
- Rationale for programs and their suitability for higher education
- State mandates providing curriculum requirements and/or guidelines
- Sample of curriculum development and approval process resulting in a program review

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

"Distance and Correspondence Education"
"Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Federal Requirement 4.2

2.7.3 In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not

narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses. *(General education)*

Rationale and Notes

This Core Requirement establishes four key principles regarding general education courses:

- General education courses are college-level and comprise a substantial component of each undergraduate degree.
- In order to promote intellectual inquiry, general education courses present a breadth of knowledge, not focusing on skills, techniques, and procedures specific *to the student's* occupation or profession.
- General education is based on a coherent rationale.
- The general education component constitutes a minimum number of semester hours, or its equivalent, and courses are to be drawn from specific academic areas.

It is essential to understand the general education component of the degree program within the context of the institution's mission and within the expectations of a college-level institution. Through general education, students encounter the basic content and methodology of the principal areas of knowledge: humanities and fine arts, social and behavioral sciences, and natural sciences and mathematics. Courses in each of these specific areas introduce a breadth of knowledge and reinforce cognitive skills and affective learning opportunities for each student. Therefore, it is important that courses selected by students do not focus on skills, techniques, and procedures *specific to that student's occupation or profession*. Such courses may also include interdisciplinary courses. It is important that institutions have criteria for evaluating courses for inclusion in the core curriculum.

> Note: Courses in basic composition that do not contain a literature component, courses in oral communication, and introductory foreign language courses are skill courses and not pure humanities courses. Therefore, for purposes of meeting this standard, none of the above may be the one course designated to fulfill the humanities/fine arts requirement in CR 2.7.3. (Interpretation adopted by the Executive Council February 2010)

> In its publications, an institution is obligated to clearly designate the specific general education courses included in the three areas of knowledge: humanities and fine arts, social and behavioral sciences, and natural sciences and mathematics. Publications should clearly indicate or direct students in their options for selecting general education courses and, in particular, those considered pure humanities/fine arts that are in accord with the interpretation above. Finally, the institution should indicate how it ensures that all students follow the pathway for the selection of general education courses as described in its publications.

> In its assessment of institutions, the Commission's review committee will evaluate whether credit hours that constitute the general education program at an institution are (1) drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics, (2) include at least one pure humanities course as defined above, and (3) include courses that do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a student's particular occupation or profession. The Committee will analyze and report on each of the above elements in its determination of compliance with CR 2.7.3.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- What evidence is found of an institutional rationale for general education that serves as the basis for including selected courses?

- How does the institution ensure that the student's breadth of knowledge acquired through the general education component of the degree program is sufficient and appropriate to its mission?
- What measures does the institution use to ensure that general education represents a substantial component of the undergraduate degree program?
- What process is used to ensure that general education courses support the goals of the general education component?
- What criteria does the institution use to assure that the required skill level meets collegiate standards?
- Do all undergraduate degree programs include at least one course from the three required areas of study?
- Does the institution designate in its publications those general education courses that are considered pure humanities/fine arts in accord with the interpretation above? How has the institution validated that the courses that the institution designates are in accord with CR 2.7.3?
- How does the institution direct students in their choice of general education courses; that is, is it clear for students how the general education course work should be followed?
- How does the institution ensure that all students follow the pathway for the selection of general education courses as described in its publications?
- How does the general education program apply to transfer students, distance and correspondence education programs, etc.?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Description of and rationale for general education
- Publications that consistently describe the general education requirements
- Documentation that shows how the institution makes it clear to students the specific options for general education requirements, including mapping those designated general education courses that are considered pure humanities/fine arts in accord with the interpretation noted above

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- List of general education learning outcomes
- Documentation of the institution's procedure for selecting courses that meet general education requirements
- Documentation that general education courses incorporate student learning outcomes associated with general education.
- Documentation on exceptions and policies and procedures for the acceptance of general education transfer courses

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions" (significant change to the general education program)
"Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1
Comprehensive Standard 3.5.3
Federal Requirement 4.2

2.8 The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of each of its academic programs. Upon application for candidacy, an applicant institution demonstrates that it meets the comprehensive standard for faculty qualifications. *(Faculty)*

Rationale and Notes
Adequacy of faculty resources is necessary to ensure the quality and the integrity of an institution's academic programs. Moreover, the mission of the institution will govern the type of faculty employed,

including the number and distribution of full-time faculty members. The achievement of the institution's mission with respect to teaching, research, and/or service will require a critical mass of permanent, full-time, qualified faculty to provide direction and oversight of the academic programs. The number of such faculty will need to be sufficient to fulfill basic faculty functions of curriculum design, development, and evaluation; teaching; identification, and assessment of appropriate student learning outcomes; student advising; research and creative activity; and institutional and professional service. The work of the core faculty may be supplemented and enhanced by judicious assignment of part-time faculty and graduate teaching assistants whose qualifications broaden and enrich the curriculum, increase learning opportunities for students, and enhance the mission of the institution.

> *Note*: This requirement addresses faculty personnel, not academic support staff. In addition, it includes the number of full-time faculty, disaggregation by academic program and mode of delivery, and location of full-time faculty, not the qualifications of faculty. Finally, it also considers the number of full-time faculty involved in research and service, for institutions that have specified those missions.

Applicant institutions are required to demonstrate compliance with CR 2.8 and CS 3.7.1 in order to be awarded candidacy.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What are the institution's definitions of terms such as full-time faculty, regular/permanent faculty, student-faculty ratio?
- How does the mission of the institution determine the number and type of faculty employed?
- How does the institution determine the number of full-time faculty needed to achieve its mission?
- What are the responsibilities of full-time faculty members and do they constitute a sufficient resource for carrying out basic faculty functions? What are the ways in which members of the institution other than full-time faculty carry out some of these functions?
- What are the institution's policies on employment of part-time or adjunct faculty?
- How are full-time faculty distributed across academic programs? Across off-campus instructional sites? Across various modes of delivery?
- How does the number of full-time faculty affect faculty work loads?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Definition of full-time faculty
- The number of full-time vs. part-time faculty disaggregated by academic programs
- The number of full-time vs. part-time faculty disaggregated by off-campus instructional sites and by mode of delivery
- A narrative describing the role of full-time faculty supporting the adequacy of the mission of the institution, including research and service

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Definitions of other instructional personnel terms such as regular/permanent faculty, student-faculty ratio
- Data such as number of faculty; faculty work loads; proportion of courses taught by fulltime faculty, part-time faculty, and graduate assistants; comparisons of peer institutions; student credit hours generated by full-time and part-time faculty, etc.
- Policies describing the role of full-time faculty (and others) in the carrying out of the basic functions of the faculty as described in the rationale
- Policies governing the employment of part-time faculty and graduate assistants

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Distance and Correspondence Education"

- Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1

2.11.2 The institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. *(Physical resources)*

Rationale and Notes

Adequate physical resources are essential to the educational environment and include well maintained buildings and grounds that are safe and appropriate for the scope of the institution's programs and services. It is reasonable that the general public and current and prospective students expect the institution to have sufficient physical resources necessary to fulfill its mission as an ongoing concern.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- How does the institution demonstrate that the physical resources of the institution are adequate in quality, scope, and condition to support the mission of its programs and services?
- How does the institution evaluate the appropriateness and sufficiency of physical resources at off-campus instructional sites?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable

Documentation of the adequacy and condition of physical resources at all locations

Examples of other Types of Documentation

- Facilities master plan
- Financial history and narrative regarding recently completed, present, or planned capital campaigns
- Facilities inventory plan
- Surveys from faculty, staff, and students addressing adequacy of the institution's physical facilities
- Data comparing facility needs to actual facilities available
- Academic master plan or similar document for planned facilities use to support academic programs, if available
- Survey results of benchmark comparisons

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

"Distance and Correspondence Education"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Comprehensive Standard 3.11.1
Comprehensive Standard 3.11.2
Comprehensive Standard 3.11.3

3.2.8 The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience and competence to lead the institution. *(Qualified administrative/academic officers)*

Rationale and Notes

In order to ensure that an institution has effective leadership to accomplish its mission, the institution employs academic and administrative officers with the credentials and expertise appropriate to the duties and responsibilities associated with their positions. This refers to key decision-makers within the institution's governance structure. Depending on the size and complexity of the institution, these individuals may or may not be at the executive level.

Note: This standard does not apply to chief executive officers. See Comprehensive Standard 3.2.1 for expectations pertaining to the chief executive officer.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What evidence exists showing that persons holding key leadership positions in the institution are qualified to carry out their responsibilities?
- If staff members with non-traditional credentials have been appointed, what evidence in their background and experience justifies their employment?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Organizational chart with names of those appointed to academic and administrative posts
- Names, positions, position descriptions, qualifications

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Resumes' for senior-level academic and administrative officers

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Distance and Correspondence Education"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Comprehensive Standard 3.2.10

3.3.1 The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas: *(Institutional effectiveness)*

3.3.1.1. educational programs, to include student learning outcomes
3.3.1.4. research within its mission, if appropriate

Rationale and Notes
This standard addresses the process of assessment that supports the institution's educational programs, its administrative support services, its academic and student support services, and, as appropriate, its research and community/public service; this process serves as the cornerstone of institutional effectiveness. Institutional effectiveness focuses on the design and improvement of educational experiences to enhance student learning.

Guiding statements designed to assist institutions in documenting compliance:
1. Institutions should interpret "outcome" in a manner consistent with an academic program or a given service unit's mission and role in the institution. It is the institution's responsibility to explain how each unit's outcomes are related to its mission and role in the institution.
2. While it is clear from the standard that assessment is at the program level for academic programs, institutions should determine the organizational levels at which assessment is useful and efficient for administrative and for academic and student support units. It is incumbent on the institution to explain how this determination follows from its mission and organizational structure.
3. Institutions are not required or expected to use the same assessment procedures in each of the four areas; in particular, administrative support services, academic and student support services, research within the mission, and community/public service within the mission need not be assessed in the same way as educational programs. However, institutions are expected to use multiple assessments in each area. Consequently, grades alone for the assessment of educational programs or student learning outcomes are insufficient.
4. Institutions that engage in research or public service should carefully frame the scope of their discussion of CS 3.3.1.4 and CS 3.3.1.5 by identifying their research and their service missions,

explaining the ways in which the institution has chosen to evaluate the effectiveness of each. This may include a connection with its educational programs and discussing its assessment of the impact of research and service on the institution and its programs, as appropriate.

5. There is a clear expectation that an institution be able to demonstrate institutional effectiveness for all its diplomas, certificates, and undergraduate and graduate educational degree programs.

6. The expectation is that the institution will engage in on-going planning and assessment to ensure that for each academic program, the institution develops and assesses student learning outcomes. Program and learning outcomes specify the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes students are expected to attain in courses or in a program. Methods for assessing the extent to which students achieve these outcomes are appropriate to the nature of the discipline, and consistent over time to enable the institution to evaluate cohorts of students who complete courses or a program. Shared widely within and across programs, the results of this assessment can affirm the institution's success at achieving its mission and can be used to inform decisions about curricular and programmatic revisions. At appropriate intervals, program and learning outcomes and assessment methods are evaluated and revised.

7. An institution may provide a *sampling* of its programs as long as it is representative of its mission and includes a valid cross-section of programs from every school or division and at each degree level. Sampling should also include programs offered at off-campus instructional sites and course work offered through distance or correspondence education. It is the institution's responsibility to make a compelling case as to why the sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's programs. This sampling, however, does not preclude the institution from having data/analysis available on the effectiveness of all programs in case evaluators request to review it. It is the evaluators' prerogative to conduct a more in-depth review of an institution's data/findings/analysis on the effectiveness of its educational programs.

8. 8. Institutional effectiveness can be achieved in a variety of ways and the mentality that "one size fits all" is inappropriate and diminishes the individual missions of institutions. The institution should develop and/or use methods and instruments that are uniquely suited to the goal statements and that are supported by faculty.

9. At the time of its review, the institution is responsible for producing mature data. Mature data can be defined as sufficient information used as a basis for sound decision making.

10. At the time of its review, the institution is responsible for providing *evidence* of improvement, based on the analysis of the assessment results, as opposed to a *plan* for improvement.

Notes: For consistency in rhetoric, the Commission uses "assessment" in place of evaluation, and "outcomes" instead of objectives/goals.
The institution should define "units" based on its organizational structure.
While institutions may organize functions differently, it is expected that all services, whether administrative or academic student support services, engage in the institutional effectiveness processes

3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning
Note: In this standard, the Commission expects the review of the effectiveness of educational programs and of student learning.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- How are expected outcomes clearly defined in measurable terms for each educational program?
- What is the evidence of assessment activities for each program?
- How are periodic reviews in which programmatic outcomes assessed, reviewed, and used for improvements?
- How does the institution's use of assessment results improve educational programs?
- If the institution used sampling, why were the sampling and findings an appropriate representation of the institution's programs?
- What assessment instruments were used and why were they selected? Were multiple assessment methods used? If so, describe.

- Have the programs assessed the extent to which they have been successful in achieving their learning outcomes?
- If called for, have program improvements been made as a result of assessment findings?
- How does the institution's use of assessment results improve educational programs?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Documentation of expected outcomes for educational programs and for student learning outcomes
- Documentation of the evaluation of those outcomes
- Evidence that the student support services and programs effectively meet the needs of students of all types
- Documentation of the use of the findings from assessment to improve the institution
- If sampling is used, (1) how the sampling is representative of the institution's mission, (2) documentation of a valid cross-section of programs, and a (3) case as to why sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's programs.

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Distance and Correspondence Education"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Core Requirement 2.5
Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1
Federal Requirement 4.1

3.3.1.4 Research within its mission, if appropriate
Note: Research within an institution's mission normally includes (1) research units, research centers, institutes, etc.; (2) sponsored research programs, usually with defined areas of research (e.g., energy, environment, innovative technologies, etc.); and (3) degree programs and courses where research is an expected outcome.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- How does the institution define research within its mission?
- Has the institution articulated its research outcomes in relation to its mission?
- How are expected outcomes clearly defined in measurable terms?
- What is the evidence of assessment activities for research?
- How are periodic reviews used for improvement of effectiveness?
- How does the institution's use of assessment results improve research?
- What assessment instruments were used and why were they selected? Were multiple assessment methods used? If so, describe.
- If the institution used sampling, why were the sampling and findings an appropriate representation of the institution's research mission?
- How does the faculty's research and scholarship contribute to and benefit the institution's research mission?
- How does research contribute to the intellectual mission of the institution?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Definition of institution's research mission
- Documentation of expected outcomes for its research mission
- Documentation of the evaluation of those outcomes
- Documentation of the use of the findings from assessment to improve the institution

- If sampling is used, (1) how the sampling is representative of the institution's mission, (2) documentation of a valid cross-section of units, and a (3) case as to why sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's research mission

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Representative sample of research activities

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
None noted

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Core Requirement 2.5
Comprehensive Standard 3.7.3

3.4.1 The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration.
(Academic program approval)

Rationale and Notes
The tradition of shared governance within American higher education recognizes the importance of both faculty and administrative involvement in the approval of educational programs. Approval by the faculty ensures that programs, including programs offered through collaborative arrangements, contain appropriate courses reflecting current knowledge within a discipline and that they are appropriate for the students enrolled. Approval by the administration affirms that educational programs are consistent with the mission of the institution and that the institution possesses both the organization and resources to ensure the quality of its educational programs.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What is the process for developing and approving educational programs?
- Who is responsible for the process?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Procedures for approving educational programs.

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Minutes from faculty and administrative meetings
- Examples that follows the program approval process
- Minutes from the curriculum committee

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
None noted

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Comprehensive Standard 3.4.7
Comprehensive Standard 3.7.5

3.4.2 The institution's continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the institution's mission. *(Continuing education/service programs)*

Rationale and Notes
This standard applies to noncredit activities and reinforces that when such activities are in place, they should be consistent with the institution's mission.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

What evidence exists that demonstrates that continuing education, outreach, and public service programs are consistent with the institution's mission?

What evidence exists that demonstrates that continuing education, outreach, and public service programs relate to the institution's mission?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable

- List/description of continuing education, outreach and service programs

Examples of other Types of Documentation

- Policies regarding the role and scope of continuing education, outreach, and public service as they relate to the institution's mission
- Information about the audiences served in the offering of such programs

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

None noted

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.5

Comprehensive Standard 3.4.8 *(if institution begins to award credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis)*

3.4.3 The institution publishes admissions policies consistent with its mission.

(Admissions policies)

Rationale and Notes

Sound admission policies are defined in relation to the institution's mission and are designed to ensure that students who are admitted to the institution or to a specific program can benefit from the institution's programs. Implicit in the policy is that the institution consistently applies the policy to all applicants and transfers; exceptions are limited in number and are based on specific criteria for waiving admission requirements.

Sound admission policies for the institution or a specific program conform to widely accepted higher education standards for admissions and define all admissions categories used by the institution, such as transfer, transient, non-degree, audit, honors, and probation or conditional.

Admission policies are published in official documents and communicated accurately and effectively to prospective students and other constituents.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- What are the admission policies for the institution and for specific programs and how are they based on widely accepted standards for undergraduate and graduate applicants?
- What evidence exists that admissions policies for the institution and for specific programs are consistent with the stated mission of the institution?
- What evidence exists that the standards for admissions to the institution and specific programs are clear, reasonable, and consistently implemented?
- How does the institution show that admission requirements are appropriate to identify qualified students who have the ability to complete a program successfully?
- How does the institution disseminate admissions policies and are they uniform in all publications?
- If admission policies differ for various delivery methods, what are the programs and why are they different?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable
- Admission policies of the institution

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Undergraduate and graduate catalogs that include admission policies, standards, and procedures
- Institutional and specific program brochures and other recruitment materials or electronic resources stating admission policies and procedures
- Documents describing how the institution evaluates applications and makes admission decisions to the institution and to programs
- Minutes or other documents showing evidence that the institution has admissions policies in accordance with good practices in higher education
- System policy or legislation regarding admission policies and procedures

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status"
"Developing Policy and Procedures Documents"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
None noted.

3.4.5 The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. *(Academic policies)*

Rationale and Notes
Good educational practice presumes that an institution's academic policies related to its educational programs are developed in concert with the appropriate input and participation of the constituencies affected by the policies and conform with generally accepted practices and policies of higher education. Each institution develops academic policies—such as grading policies, withdrawals, degree completion requirements—that are appropriate to its programs and students and that accurately portray its programs and services. Good educational practice presumes that these academic policies lead to a teaching and learning environment that enhance student learning and further implies that each institution engages in a process of program review. Faculty members assume responsibility for determining good educational practice and, therefore, should have a substantive role in the development and review of academic policies.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- How does the institution determine good academic practices within the context of its mission?
- How are academic policies developed and approved?
- To what extent are the institution's academic policies made available to those constituencies affected by the policies?
- What is the approval process for materials that the institution uses to portray itself?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Institutional publications that contain academic policies

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Publications that include a description of the process by which academic policies are developed and approved
- Publications and other material that portray the institution to interested parties
- Minutes of meetings in which academic policies are modified or approved
- Example of the process for modifying an academic policy

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Distance and Correspondence Education"
"Developing Policy and Procedures Documents"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Federal Requirement 4.3

3.4.7 The institution ensures the quality of educational programs and courses offered through consortial relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the Principles, and periodically evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the mission of the institution. *(See Commission policy "*Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures*.") (Consortial relationships/contractual agreements)*

Rationale and Notes
An institution is responsible for ensuring the quality of all course work offered through consortial relationships or contractual agreements and included on its students' transcripts as credit earned from the institution. It is also responsible for ensuring that the quality of such programs meets the standards/requirements of the *Principles* required of similar programs.

A signed written agreement that delineates the responsibility and role of all parties to the agreement is basic to the institution's ability to ensure the quality of the educational programs and courses covered by the agreements. Regular evaluation and comparison of program and course offerings against the institutional mission are also important in establishing educational quality.

> *Note*: This standard addresses substantial academic contracts. It typically would include joint degrees, dual degrees, and contracts supporting educational programs. An institution participating in such arrangements must meet the reporting requirements outlined in Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures." This standard typically does not include clinical training, internships, study abroad programs, and transfer/articulation agreements.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- How does an institution's contract or consortial agreement provide for the following: (1) a clear indication of the responsibilities of all parties to the agreement; (2) provision for ensuring the quality of the programs and courses offered through the agreement; and (3) provision for evaluating the agreement in relation to the mission of the institution?
- What is the institution's process for ensuring the quality of programs and courses offered through contract or consortial agreements?
- How does the process involve all parties to the agreement?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Copies of signed contracts and consortial agreements
- Evidence that the institution evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the purpose of the institution

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Documents that clearly stipulate the responsibility of each party to ensure program and course quality
- Documents that clearly stipulate the responsibility of the SACSCOC institution to ensure ongoing compliance with the standards/requirements as applicable to the program

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

"Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures"
"Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions"
"Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
All relevant standards outlined under Educational Programs

3.4.10 The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty. *(Responsibility for curriculum)*

Rationale and Notes
The curriculum is directly related to the institution's mission and the educational degrees, certificates, and diplomas. This standard assumes that the faculty has primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum.

The route for curriculum approval is typically through processes controlled by faculty which begin at the department or program level followed by appropriate approvals within and external to the institution. Initiation of and responsibility for curriculum *content* is faculty driven. Additionally, it is the responsibility of the faculty to assess periodically the curriculum for quality and effectiveness and make changes as appropriate.

When reviewing the *quality* of its curriculum, the institution might consider characteristics such as the following: (1) currency and relevancy of the theories and practices in the field or discipline; (2) intellectual rigor appropriate to the level of the degree program; or (3) the "connectivity" among the components of the curriculum.

When considering the *effectiveness* of its curriculum, the faculty establishes learning outcomes of the curriculum and assesses the extent to which these outcomes are being achieved. Consequently, the characteristics for assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum might include the extent to which the curriculum provides opportunities for (1) increasingly complex understandings of theories, principles, and practices: (2) increasingly complex levels of analysis and development of skills; and (3) application of theories and principles.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What is the process for the development, evaluation, and improvement of the curriculum?
- What is the role of faculty regarding the content, quality, and effectiveness of the institution's curriculum?
- What are the policies and procedures for expanding or limiting the curriculum and what are the faculty's responsibilities?
- How does the institution ensure the quality and effectiveness of its curriculum so that it is appropriate to its educational programs? What standards for review of curriculum quality does the institution use?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Practices addressing the role and responsibility of faculty for curriculum

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Minutes or bylaws that document the role and responsibility of faculty in determining the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum
- Curriculum evaluations conducted by faculty showing attention to curriculum quality and effectiveness
- Examples of curricular changes which trace and illustrate an effective process

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees"

3.4.11 **For each major in a degree program, the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement applies to a curricular area or concentration.** *(Academic program coordination)*

Rationale and Notes

This standard assumes that individuals competent in the field oversee each major or curricular area or area of concentration in undergraduate and graduate degree programs in order to assure that each contains essential curricular components, has appropriate content and pedagogy, and maintains currency in the degree. Degree programs normally are coordinated by academically qualified faculty who hold degree credentials or other qualifications appropriate to the degree offered. If responsibility for coordination for curriculum development and review are assigned to persons other than faculty, the institution should provide appropriate documentation and rationale.

> *Note:* It is the responsibility of the institution to define "field" as it applies to its academic programs.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- What evidence exists that the coordinator for each major, curricular area, or concentration in an undergraduate or graduate degree program has the qualifications and credentials for leadership in the development and review of the program and its curriculum?
- What evidence exists that the coordinator provides oversight for assessing the quality of the program and its curriculum for the respective undergraduate or graduate degree programs and for ensuring that the curriculum, as well as the delivery of the curriculum, is educationally sound?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- List of program coordinators, their area of responsibility, and their qualifications for coordinating the designated program
Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Description of coordinator responsibilities
- Definition of the term "field" as it applies to the institution's academic programs

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Distance and Correspondence Education"
"Faculty Credential Guidelines"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
None noted

3.5.1 **The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them.** *(General education competencies)*

Rationale and Notes

Since general education requirements are central to educational programs, this standard assumes that the institution will define specifically which competencies are appropriate to the goals of its general education program and consistent with principles of good practice. The institution is responsible for identifying measures to determine the extent to which students have attained those competencies during their course of study as well as the extent to which students have actually attained those competencies.

> *Note:* This standard addresses college-level competencies within the general education core; it does not require a specific course to address each competency. In addition, there is no requirement regarding when the institution must determine student attainment of competencies.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What are the specific college-level competencies within the general education program?
- What evidence is available to show the extent to which students have attained these competencies?
- What evidence exists that demonstrates that the institution identifies competencies that are college-level?
- What criteria does the institution use to set an acceptable benchmark for student attainment of competencies?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Identification of competencies
- Justification that all competencies are at the college level and the degree to which students have attained them are acceptable
- Evidence of the extent to which students of undergraduate degree programs have attained the college-level competencies

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Follow up studies of graduates

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Core Requirement 2.7.3
Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1
Federal Requirement 4.1

3.5.2 At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. *(See Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards.") (Institutional credits for a degree)*

Rationale and Notes
This standard establishes the general principle addressing the integrity of a degree; that is, if an institution awards an academic degree, then it is responsible for the delivery of an appropriate portion of the academic experiences applicable to the degree. The standard also establishes the threshold for determining the acceptable portion of coursework that the institution ought to provide for the degree.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What evidence exists that the institution has a policy stating the amount of credit which must be earned through instruction by the institution?

- How does the institution monitor the amount of credit earned at the institution with respect to the total number of credits required for the degree?
- How are the policies disseminated?
- How does an institution identify on its transcript the name of the institution from which a course was taken?
- How does an institution identify on its transcript that the degree awarded is a collaborative degree?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Degree completion policies
- Evidence that verifies that at least 25 percent of the credits required for the degree have been earned at the institution

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Process for monitoring the amount of credit earned at the institution
- Policies, procedures, and any operational Manuals regarding the awarding of credit
- Examples of the implementation of those policies

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures"
"Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions"
"The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Comprehensive Standard 3.12

3.5.3 The institution publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. *(See Commission policy "The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees.") (Undergraduate program requirements)*

Rationale and Notes
Each undergraduate program of study identifies courses that are designed as introductions to the major, required courses, electives, general education, capstone courses, and any other program requirements. Undergraduate program requirements allow for an integrated understanding of the discipline. Such programs display a clear rationale and design and include clearly stated and measurable outcomes consistent with the mission of the institution.

Commonly accepted practices for the requirements of an undergraduate program address an appropriate number of semester hours, or its equivalent; a coherent course of study appropriate to higher education; and the completion of an appropriate general education component at the collegiate level.

The general education program defines the underlying learning experience that supports the institution's mission and traditionally provides the "breadth" component to an undergraduate education. Through general education, students encounter the basic content and methodology of the principal areas of knowledge that introduce a breadth of knowledge and reinforce cognitive skills and affective learning opportunities for each student. An effective general education program has underlying rationale and design with goals consistent with the mission of the institution.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What evidence exists that the institution defines and publishes requirements for each undergraduate program?

- What is the process for determining what coursework is included and for establishing how coursework conforms to commonly accepted standards and practices in the program requirements?
- What is the process for determining what coursework is included in the major program requirements?
- How does the institution demonstrate that all appropriate publications provide clear, complete, and consistent information about each program?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- For all educational programs, evidence that the institution has published documents that describe general education and program completion requirements

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- For program requirements, (1) comparison of educational programs with similar programs offered at peer institutions, (2) programmatic/specialized accreditation, and (3) external program reviews

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees"
"Distance and Correspondence Education"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Core Requirement 2.7.2
Core Requirement 2.7.3
Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1
Federal Requirement 4.2
Federal Requirement 4.4

3.5.4 At least 25 percent of the course hours in each major at the baccalaureate level are taught by faculty members holding an appropriate terminal degree, usually the earned doctorate, or the equivalent of the terminal degree. *(Terminal degrees of faculty)*

Rational and Notes
The quality of a degree program relies in part on the quality and credentials of faculty members providing instruction in the program. This standard establishes a minimum acceptable threshold for determining the acceptable portion of coursework for a major that ought to be provided by faculty members holding a terminal degree. Such credentials provide adequate experience and a knowledge base to provide the necessary depth and breadth in the program.

> *Note:* When calculating data in support of compliance, an institution may use course hours or courses. In addition, the institution should take into consideration course hours in each major offered at off-campus instructional sites; disaggregated by location/by delivery. When providing data, the institution should use two consecutive semesters or the equivalent. Do not include general education and pre-requisites.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- How does the institution define course hours within a major?
- What percentage of courses/course hours are taught by faculty holding the terminal degree?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- List of faculty in each major who hold the appropriate terminal degree

- Evidence verifying that at least 25 percent of courses or course hours required for a major are taught by faculty members holding a terminal degree

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Definition and listing of majors
- Evidence that disaggregation data includes consideration of location and modality of course work

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Faculty Credential Guidelines"
"Distance and Correspondence Education"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1

3.6.1 The institution's post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, master's and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs. *(Postbaccalaureate program rigor)*

Rationale and Notes
Post-baccalaureate degree programs are progressively more complex and rigorous than undergraduate programs and are consistent with the expectation of higher education institutions. Requirements in courses not specifically designed for graduate credit but that allow both undergraduate and graduate enrollment ensure that there is a clear distinction between the requirements of undergraduate students and graduate students.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What process is used by the institution to clearly define the content and rigor of postbaccalaureate degree programs?
- What evidence exists that the institution has post-baccalaureate professional degree programs and master's and doctoral programs that are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Publications that show differentiation between undergraduate and post- baccalaureate programs

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Course syllabi describing the advanced body of learning to be accomplished through completion of the post-baccalaureate course work

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
None noted

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
None noted

3.6.2 The institution structures its graduate curricula (1) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (2) to ensure ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences. *(Graduate curriculum)*

Rationale and Notes

Effective graduate instruction provides the foundational knowledge and skill development to support independent research and professional practice. Graduates have the ability to contribute to a profession or field of study. Although the extent to which students are expected to demonstrate these competencies will vary with the level of the graduate degree, faculty within graduate programs define the skills, knowledge, and competencies required and evaluate the ability of students to engage in independent research and professional practice.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- How is the literature of the discipline incorporated into the curriculum requirements?
- What evidence exists that the students are engaged in ongoing research or appropriate professional practice and training experiences?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Publications containing program requirements
- Course syllabi

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Examples of independent research projects, portfolios, case studies, theses, dissertations, or other examples by graduate students
- Use of examples in CS 3.3.1.1 that show student knowledge of literature in the discipline

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
None noted

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1
Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.4

3.6.3 At least one-third of credits toward a graduate or postbaccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. *(See Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures.") (Institutional credits for a graduate degree)*

Rationale and Notes
An institution is responsible for the integrity of its graduate and post-baccalaureate professional degree programs. The institution establishes policies that ensure that at least one-third of credits is earned through the institution awarding the degree. The standard also establishes the threshold for determining the acceptable portion of coursework that the institution should provide for the degree.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What evidence exists that the institution has a policy stating the amount of credit which must be earned through instruction by the institution?
- How does the institution monitor the amount of credit earned at the institution with respect to the total number of credits required for the degree?
- How are the policies disseminated?
- How does an institution identify on its transcript the name of the institution from which a course was taken?
- How does an institution identify on its transcript that the degree awarded is a collaborative degree?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable

- Degree completion policies
- Evidence that verifies that at least one-third of the credits required for the degree have been earned at the institution

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Process for monitoring the amount of credit earned at the institution
- Policies, procedures, and any operational Manuals regarding the awarding of credit
- Examples of the implementation of those policies

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures"
"Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Comprehensive Standard 3.12

3.6.4 **The institution defines and publishes requirements for its graduate and post-baccalaureate professional programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs.** *(Post-baccalaureate program requirements)*

Rationale and Notes
Each graduate and post-baccalaureate professional program of study identifies courses that are program requirements and any pre-requisite courses. Graduate program requirements allow for an integrated understanding of the discipline. Such programs display a clear rationale and design and include clearly stated and measurable outcomes consistent with the mission of the institution.

Commonly accepted practices for the requirements of a graduate program address an appropriate number of semester hours, or its equivalent, and a coherent course of study appropriate to higher education.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What evidence exists that the institution defines and publishes requirements for each graduate and post-baccalaureate professional program of study?
- What is the process for determining what coursework is included and for establishing how coursework conforms to commonly accepted standards and practices in the program requirements?
- What is the process for determining what coursework is included in the major program requirements?
- How does the institution demonstrate that all appropriate publications provide clear, complete, and consistent information about each program?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- For all educational programs, evidence that the institution has published documents that describe program completion requirements

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- For program requirements, (1) comparative data for programs with peer institutions, (2) programmatic/specialized accreditation, and (3) external program reviews

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Distance and Correspondence Education"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Federal Requirement 4.2
Federal Requirement 4.4

3.7.1 The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. *(See Commission guidelines "Faculty Credentials.") (Faculty competence)*

Rationale and Notes

This standard asserts the fundamental principle that qualified, effective faculty members are essential to carrying out the goals of the mission of the institution and ensuring the quality and integrity of the academic programs of the institution. The emphasis is on overall qualifications rather than simply academic credentials and, that while academic credentials are primary and in most cases will be the standard qualification for faculty members, other types of qualifications may prove to be appropriate. It is also important to note that the documentation and justification of qualifications for each member of the faculty are the responsibility of the institution. This includes faculty teaching outside their discipline.

> *Notes*: Institutions should use the Commission's "Faculty Roster Form for Full-time and Part-Time Faculty" to report the qualifications of all faculty. Information requested on the form should be provided for all full-time and part-time faculty teaching credit courses that can be part of a degree, certificate, diploma, or other credential. Faculty teaching developmental/remedial courses should also be included. Teaching assistants should be included only if they are the instructor of record.
>
> An institution is responsible for identifying the instructor of record; that is, the person qualified to teach the course and who has overall responsibility for the development/ implementation of the syllabus, the achievement of student learning outcomes included as part of the syllabus, and for issuing grades.
>
> For the submission of the Compliance Certification, a Track A institution (offering only undergraduate degrees) should submit rosters for fall term of the current academic year and spring term of the previous academic year. A Track B institution (offering graduate degrees) should submit rosters for fall and spring term of the previous academic year.
>
> Transcripts for faculty should be available during on-site reviews but are not required to be part of the documentation provided as part of the Compliance Certification or a substantive change application/prospectus.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- How does the mission of the institution influence the selection and qualifications of faculty?
- How does the institution determine the competencies of members of the faculty and justify that the qualifications of the members of the faculty meet these competencies?
- How does the institution document and justify the qualifications for each member of the faculty?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if appropriate
- A complete roster of faculty, qualifications, and teaching assignments (See Commission "Faculty Roster Form for Full-time and Part-Time Faculty" and directions for completing the form.)

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Guidelines governing the qualifications of faculty members necessary to carry out the mission of the institution and the process for their selection that ensures these qualifications
- A file or portfolio on each faculty member which includes pertinent up-to-date information describing the qualifications of the faculty member such as transcripts, curriculum vitae, teaching evaluations, and institutional qualification justifications in nonstandard situations
- Guidelines for identifying the instructor of record

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Faculty Credential Guidelines"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Core Requirement 2.8
Comprehensive Standard 3.5.4

3.12.1 The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the Commission's substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes. *(See Commission policy "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions.") (Substantive change)*

Rationale and Notes
Substantive change is a significant modification or expansion of the nature and scope of an accredited institution. The reporting and review of substantive change ensures that the scope of programs offered by the institution have undergone appropriate review by the Commission.
The *Principles of Accreditation* states:

> "The Commission on Colleges accredits the entire institution and its programs and services, wherever they are located and however they are delivered. Accreditation, specific to an institution, is based on conditions existing at the time of the most recent evaluation and is not transferable. When an accredited institution significantly modifies or expands its scope, or changes the nature of its affiliation or its ownership, a substantive change review is required."

A member institution is responsible for following the substantive change policy by informing the Commission of changes in accord with the Commission's procedures and, when required, seeking approval prior to the initiation of the change. If an institution fails to follow SACSCOC substantive change policy and procedures, it may lose its Title IV funding or be required by the U.S. Department of Education to reimburse it for money received by the institution for programs related to the unreported substantive change. In addition, the institution's case may be referred to SACSCOC Board of Trustees for the imposition of a sanction or for removal from membership.

Institutions have the following obligations regarding substantive change and compliance with this standard:
- Member institutions are required to notify the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) of changes in accordance with the substantive change policy and, when required, seek approval prior to the initiation of changes.
- Member institutions are required to have an internal policy/procedures to ensure that all substantive changes are reported to the Commission in a timely fashion.

Substantive change includes:
- Any change in the established mission or objectives of the institution

- Any change in legal status, form of control, or ownership of the institution
- The addition of courses or programs that represent a significant departure, either in content or method of delivery, from those that were offered when the institution was last evaluated
- The addition of courses or programs of study at a degree or credential level different from that which is included in the institution's current accreditation or reaffirmation.
- A change from clock hours to credit hours
- A substantial increase in the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program
- The establishment of an additional location geographically apart from the main campus at which the institution offers at least 50 percent of an educational program.
- The establishment of a branch campus
- Closing a program, off-campus site, branch campus or institution
- Entering into a collaborative academic arrangement such as a dual degree program or a joint degree program with another institution
- Acquiring another institution or a program or location of another institution
- Adding a permanent location at a site where the institution is conducting a teach-out program for a closed institution
- Entering into a contract by which an entity not eligible for Title IV funding offers 25% or more of one or more of the accredited institution's programs

The list of types of substantive changes may change; therefore, an institution should always check the Commission's policy "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions" for the most updated information.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- Does the institution have an internal policy for the notification of substantive changes?
- Is the policy comprehensive; that is, does it address all aspects of substantive change?
- What procedures does the institution have in place to ensure appropriate notification of substantive change?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Copies of correspondence documenting submission of notification/approval for substantive changes instituted since the last decennial review by the Commission.
- Copy of the institution's internal procedure outlining the process for notifying the Commission regarding substantive change

Examples of other Types of Documentation
None noted

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions"
"Closing a Program, Site, Branch or Institution"
"Mergers, Consolidations, Change of Ownership, Acquisitions, and Change of Governance"
"Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures"
"Separate Accreditation for Units of a Member Institution"
"Integrity and Accuracy in Institutional Representation"
"Developing Policy and Procedures Documents"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Principle 1.1
Comprehensive Standard 3.13.1

4.1 The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement consistent with its mission. Criteria may include: enrollment data; retention,

graduation, course completion, and job placement rates; state licensing examinations; student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals. *(Student achievement)*

Rationale and Notes

An institution needs to be able to document its success with respect to student achievement. In doing so, it may use a broad range of criteria to include, as appropriate, enrollment data; retention, graduation, course completion, and job placement rates; state licensing examinations; student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals.

> *Note:* In accord with federal regulations, it is expected that the institution will demonstrate its success with respect to student achievement and indicate the criteria and threshold of acceptability used to determine that success. In its report, the Commission's off-site (for reaffirmations) and on-site committees will examine and analyze (1) documentation demonstrating success with respect to student achievement, (2) the appropriateness of criteria and threshold of acceptability used to determine student achievement, and (3) data provided to document student achievement.

Relevant Questions for Consideration

- How does the institution document successful student achievement in relation to its mission?
- Are the criteria mentioned above in this standard appropriate to the mission of the institution? If so, how does the institution use the findings?
- If the institution does not use the criteria above in this standard, what are the criteria used by the institution and why are they appropriate?
- What is the expected threshold of achievement for each criterion and why is it appropriate?
- How does the institution use data to support and improve student achievement?

Documentation

Required Documentation, if applicable
- Documentation of appropriate criteria used to determine successful student achievement
- Documentation of the expected threshold of achievement for each criterion and the rationale for why each is appropriate
- Documentation of data used to demonstrate achievement of goals

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Sample documentation of student achievement such as trend data showing course completion by discipline, pass rates on state licensing exams, job placement rates by degree program, and others
- Documentation of the institution actively following up with students who have graduated

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

Commission Statement on Sampling (See "sampling" in the Glossary.)

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Core Requirement 2.5
Comprehensive Standard 3.3.1.1

4.4 Program length is appropriate for each of the institution's educational programs. *(Program length)*

Rationale and Notes

Accepted practices in higher education are used to establish completion requirements that determine program length. Educational programs are of sufficient length to include appropriate course work, of sufficient duration to provide for mastery of the subject matter.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- For each educational program, what is the program length?
- What are the criteria and process used to determine each program's length?
- For any program length that differs significantly from accepted practices, what is the basis for the variation?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Publications that describe the length of all educational programs

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Documentation of the criteria used in determining program length
- Processes used to determine program length
- Evidence supporting program length that is significantly different from accepted practices

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Distance and Correspondence Education"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Core Requirement 2.7.2
Core Requirement 2.7.3
Comprehensive Standard 3.4.1

4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. *(See Commission policy "Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions.") (Student complaints)*

Rationale and Notes
Student complaints need to be addressed in a fair and professional manner, and the policies and procedures governing student complaints need to be well publicized and provide clear and consistent guidelines for their resolution.

> *Note:* In addition to FR 4.5 addressing student complaints, the Commission's "Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions" states:
>
> Each institution is required to have in place student complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well-publicized. *(See FR 4.5).* The Commission also requires, in accord with federal regulations, that each institution maintains a record of complaints received by the institution. This record is made available to the Commission upon request. This record will be reviewed and evaluated by the Commission as part of the institution's decennial evaluation. (page 2)

The Commission requires that institutions respond to the requirement of the policy statement by documenting compliance under CS 3.13.1 of the institution's Compliance Certification or include documentation under FR 4.5. The Compliance Certification states that "when addressing this policy statement, the institution should provide information to the Commission describing how the institution maintains its record and also include the following: (1) individuals/offices responsible for the maintenance of the record(s), (2) elements of a complaint review that are included in the record, and (3) where the

record(s) is located (centralized or decentralized). The record itself will be reviewed during the on-site evaluation of the institution."

For FR 4.5 and CS 3.13 (as it applies to complaints), at the time of its review of an institution, the Commission will review (1) the acceptability of the complaint policy of the institution, (2) whether the institution follows its policy in the resolution of student complaints, and (3) the institution's record of student complaints in the examination for patterns.

If a pattern of student complaints exists and those complaints are related to SACSCOC accreditation standards, the Commission will review the complaints if the issues were unresolved.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What are the policies and procedures governing student complaints and are they adequate to meet the needs of the students?
- How are the policies and procedures governing student complaints disseminated?
- What is the evidence that the publicized policies and procedures are followed when resolving student complaints?
- How does the institution retain a record of student complaints?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Policies and procedures for addressing student complaints
- Evidence that the published policies and procedures are followed when resolving student complaints
- An example of a student complaint resolution (with sensitive information redacted)
- See CS 3.13 for additional requirements applicable to complaints

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Evidence that complaint policies and procedures are published and disseminated

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions"
"Distance and Correspondence Education"
"Developing Policy and Procedures Documents"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
None noted

4.6 Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies. *(Recruitment materials)*

Rationale and Notes
Institutional integrity requires that recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution and that its practices and policies are in accord with the published information.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- Do recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices, policies, and academic programs?
- How does the institution ensure that its recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Copies of recruitment materials, publications, and presentations

Examples of other Types of Documentation

- Documents that provide evidence of practices for ongoing accuracy

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Developing Policy and Procedures Documents"
"Distance and Correspondence Education"
"Integrity and Accuracy in Institutional Representation"
"Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirement, if applicable
Principle 1.1
Comprehensive Standard 3.4.3

4.8 An institution that offers distance or correspondence education documents each of the following: *(Distance and correspondence education)*

4.8.1 demonstrates 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 by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (a) a secure login and pass code, (b) proctored examinations, or (c) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

4.8.2 has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs.

4.8.3 has a written procedure distributed at the time of registration or enrollment that notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

Rationale and Notes
To protect the integrity of educational credentials awarded to students enrolled in distance or correspondence education courses or programs, an institution takes measures to ensure that a student awarded credit in distance or correspondence education courses is the same student who successfully completes the course and is tested for the achievement of intended student learning outcomes. To this end, an institution is required to verify the identity of a student enrolled in distance or correspondence education courses or programs, ensure that the method used to verify the identity protects the privacy of students enrolled, and notify the student in advance enrollment regarding any projected additional charges associated with the verification process.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- How does the institution demonstrate that the student who registers in the distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives credit?
- Because the institution is obligated to select a verification method for the identification of students enrolled in such programs, how does the institution protect the privacy of students enrolled in distance or correspondence education?
- Do the institution's written procedures for notifying students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification include the appropriate provisions of the standard?

- What office(s) is responsible for ensuring that the provisions of this standard are enforced?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Method(s) used by the institution verifying the identity of the student enrolled in distance or correspondence education courses or programs
- Written procedure regarding the protection of privacy of the student enrolled in distance or correspondence education courses or programs
- Written procedure addressing the notification of projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity

Examples of other Types of Documentation
- Process for ensuring ongoing verification, including persons responsible for implementation

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable
"Developing Policy and Procedures Documents"
"Distance and Correspondence Education"
"Integrity and Accuracy in Institutional Representation"
"Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status"
"Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable
Comprehensive Standard 3.13

4.9 The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. *(See Commission policy "Credit Hours.")* *(Definition of credit hours)*

Rationale and Notes
Academic credit has provided the basis for measuring the amount of engaged learning time expected of a typical student enrolled not only in traditional classroom settings but also laboratories, studios, internships and other experiential learning, and distance and correspondence education. Students, institutions, employers, and others rely on the common currency of academic credit to support a wide range of activities, including the transfer of students from one institution to another. For several decades, the federal government has relied on credits as a measure of student academic engagement as a basis of awarding financial aid. Because of the significance of the awarding of credit for coursework or experiences, an institution is obligated to ensure that credit hours awarded for courses and programs conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education.

Relevant Questions for Consideration
- What is the institution's definition of a credit hour?
- How does the institution define credit hour when it differs from commonly accepted practices in higher education? What are the criteria used?
- What is the process and criteria used by an institution that calibrates documented student learning to the amount of academically engaged time for a typical student?

Documentation
Required Documentation, if applicable
- Policy for determining credit hours awarded, including the definition of a credit hour used by the institution

Examples of other Types of Documentation

- Evidence that the institution consistently applies its definition in the awarding of credit for courses and programs
- Descriptions of processes and criteria used to award credit for courses and programs outside the commonly accepted practices in higher education

Reference to Commission Documents, if applicable

"Credit Hours"
"Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions"
"Developing Policy and Procedures Documents"

Cross References to other related Standards/Requirements, if applicable

Core Requirement 2.7
Comprehensive Standard 3.4.6
Federal Requirement 4.4