



Policy Statement on Institutional Effectiveness

In the current *Standards for Accreditation*, the New England Commission of Higher Education has reaffirmed the importance of each institution measuring its effectiveness. An institution's efforts and ability to assess its effectiveness and use the obtained information for its improvement are important indicators of institutional quality. The Commission, through its evaluative processes, will appraise these quality indicators. Just as assessment is now a pervasive theme throughout the standards, so too should it be a theme in all comprehensive self-studies.

The Commission views such assessment as a means of enhancing institutional effectiveness. The assessment process requires the gathering and analysis of evidence of congruence between an institution's stated mission, purposes, and objectives and the actual outcomes of its programs and activities. In order to inform its planning, decision-making, and resource allocation, an institution needs to determine how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its mission and purposes. Moreover, the institution needs documentary evidence to support assertions of quality made in its self-study and in its communications with its constituencies.

The Commission expects each institution, as part of its dedication to institutional improvement, to monitor its effectiveness in achieving its mission and purposes. Accordingly, the institution collects and analyzes relevant data and uses this information in the institutional planning process as a basis for sustaining quality and self-improvement. Thus, assessment functions as a tool for the encouragement of such improvement as well as a basis for quality assurance.

There is no one best way to assess institutional effectiveness, and the Commission prescribes no formula that an institution must use for measuring or demonstrating its effectiveness. Assessment efforts will vary among different types of institutions as well as among institutions of the same type. Successful assessment efforts are compatible with the institution's mission and its available resources.

Assessment is not a one-time activity; rather, it is evolutionary, ongoing, and incremental. The Commission realizes that an institution initially engaging in assessment will be likely to do so on a limited basis. However, it expects that in due time its assessment efforts will be more comprehensive, systematic, integrative, and organic. Regardless of their scope, these efforts will be both qualitative and quantitative. Assessment does not require standardized or even professionally developed instruments or complicated methods of statistical analysis.

While assessment is an overall institutional concern, as reflected in the various standards for accreditation, its primary focus is the teaching-learning experience. To the greatest extent

possible, therefore, the institution should describe explicit achievements expected of its students and adopt reliable procedures for assessing those achievements.

Ultimately, assessment and accreditation share the common goal of enabling the institution to reach its fullest academic potential by providing the highest quality education possible. In pursuing that goal, institutional autonomy should be preserved, innovation encouraged, and the distinct character of each institution recognized and honored.

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