

NOTE ON SAMPLING

There is an expectation that an institution is able to demonstrate institutional effectiveness for all its educational programs and related academic and student services. The volume of material represented by this activity can be quite large, especially at larger institutions. To this end, an institution may provide a sampling of the effectiveness of its programs at the time of its comprehensive review. Sampling, for the purpose of accreditation, includes the following three elements:

- (1) A representation that is mindful of the institution's mission.*
- (2) A valid cross-section of programs from every school or division (and across all levels), with every major division and level of program represented. Sampling should be inclusive of off-campus sites and distance or correspondence education offerings, as applicable; at a minimum, the institution should clarify that assessment activities are inclusive of these modes of delivery and explain that process.*
- (3) A compelling case as to why the sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's educational programs and its academic and student support services. Sampling does not preclude the institution from having effectiveness data/analysis available on all programs and units. It is the prerogative of a SACSCOC committee to conduct a more in-depth review of an institution's data/findings/analysis on the effectiveness of all its educational programs and its academic and student support services.*

8.2.a

The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results for student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs. (Student outcomes: educational programs)

Rationale and Notes

For purposes of this standard, an academic program is a credential as defined by the institution. A degree with a defined major is clearly a program. On the other hand, programs in the same field but taught at different levels (e.g., a BBA and an MBA) are typically viewed as distinct programs. The [Institutional Summary Form Prepared for SACSCOC Reviews](#) should be a useful guide as to how programs are defined within this standard.

The expectation is that the institution will engage in ongoing planning and assessment to ensure that for each academic program, the institution develops and assesses expected student learning outcomes. Expected student 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.

NOTE

See the Standard 8.2 discussion as well as this substandard for full coverage of this standard within the Resource Manual.

Questions to Consider

- Is there a common process across programs at the institution, or is the means of establishing outcomes assessment processes widely dispersed? If the latter, how is information collected and evaluated?
- What is the role of faculty, chairs, deans, oversight committees and others in the process?
- Is the process systematic and ongoing?
- Are expected student learning outcomes clearly defined in measurable terms for each educational program?
- What types of assessment activities occur to determine whether learning outcomes are met?
- How are results from periodic assessment activities analyzed?
- How does the institution seek improvements in educational programs after conducting these analyses?
- If programs consistently report “no improvements needed,” what happens?
- If the institution used sampling to present its process and to establish compliance with the standard, why were the sampled programs an appropriate representation of all the institution's programs?
- Were multiple assessment methods used? If so, describe.
- How has the institution's use of assessment results improved educational programs?

Sample Documentation

- Lists of program-specific expected student learning outcomes for educational programs (usually embedded into individual program or unit reports).
- Descriptions of the assessment measures used to collect information on student learning.
- Details on the assessment and analysis of results from these assessments.
- Specific examples where the findings from analysis of results have led to efforts to make program improvements.

- 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 (3) make a case as to why sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's programs.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

SACSCOC policy: [Distance and Correspondence Education](#)

SACSCOC interpretation: [Interpretation on Sampling](#)
[Interpretation of Standard 8.2.a](#)

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

CR 7.1 *(Institutional planning)*
 Standard 7.2 *(Quality Enhancement Plan)*
 CR 8.1 *(Student achievement)*

8.2.b The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results for student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs. *(Student outcomes: general education)*

Rationale and Notes

General education is a critical element of undergraduate degree programs, yet the delivery of courses related to general education is often dispersed across multiple academic departments. As a result, there is a tendency for this extremely important part of the undergraduate degree experience to be assessed, revised, and discussed in a haphazard fashion. This standard ensures that general education competencies are specifically addressed by establishing expected learning outcomes, assessing these outcomes, and providing evidence of seeking improvements based on the findings.

The standard does not mandate a specific approach to this outcomes assessment process. The approach is up to the institution, consistent with principles of good practice, the role general education plays in that institution's curricula, and the organizational structure of the institution. The institution is responsible for identifying measures of expected student learning outcomes to determine the extent to which students have attained appropriate college-level competencies.

NOTES

See the Standard 8.2 discussion as well as this substandard for full coverage of this standard within the Resource Manual. Note that "Sampling" does not apply to general education assessment due to the limited number of competencies involved.