

Commission on Colleges
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

A Data-Driven Case for Compliance:
Suggestions for Assessing the Quality of the Case

The suggestions presented below are intended to assist you in developing your institution's case for compliance with the Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards within the *Principles of Accreditation*. The application of the POA is always within the context of the institution's mission. Thus the institution's case should reflect that relationship. The success of the case depends on the clarity and rationale of the assertion, the data on which the assertion rests, and on the quality of the analysis linking the data to the assertion. In addition to the quality of the data and analyses, successful cases are characterized by the overall quality of their presentation. Cases that address the requirements in a comprehensive and substantive manner, and that are organized well, written clearly and concisely, and supported with easily accessible data are generally perceived more positively than cases lacking those characteristics.

The component parts of the matrix are not summative nor are they necessarily of equal weight. They are intended as guidelines for you to consider as you and your colleagues develop the institution's case. You will need to apply your best professional judgment; informed understanding of best practices within the higher education community and your peer institutions, and your knowledge of the institution and the Commission's requirements as you arrive at a judgment about the overall quality of your institution's case. Ultimately, the Commission on Colleges through its peer review process will determine the acceptability of the case.

| COMPONENT | NOT ACCEPTABLE | WEAK | ACCEPTABLE | OUTSTANDING |
|--|--|---|---|--|
| Clarity of the assertion (to what extent does the institution perceive itself to be in compliance?) | The institution does not provide a statement about the extent of its compliance with the requirement | The institution provides a summary statement of its compliance with the requirement (such as "we are in compliance with this requirement") but does not clearly address each component of the requirement | The case includes a clear and concise summary statement of the institution's compliance with the requirement, including each of its components (as necessary) | The institution provides a clear, concise, and comprehensive statement of its compliance with the requirement, including each of its components (as necessary) |
| Data supporting the assertion | Data are not presented, not appropriate to the issue, and/or are not accessible to the reader. | Data are presented to support the assertion but are deficient because of one of the following reasons: Reliability Relevance Sufficiency Representative Recency | The data provided sufficiently support the assertion because of three or more of the following reasons: Reliability Relevance Sufficiency Representative Recency | The data provided are strong in all of the following characteristics applicable to the case: Reliability Relevance Sufficiency Representative Recency |

| | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <p>Data-driven analysis of compliance</p> | <p>No analysis of compliance is provided.</p> <p>Data are presented but the narrative provides no discussion or explanation of the data and their importance to the issues</p> | <p>The analysis does not address all aspects of the requirement</p> <p>The analysis lacks clarity, conciseness, and focus</p> | <p>The data-driven analysis adequately addresses all aspects of the requirement</p> <p>The data-driven analysis is clear, concise, and focused</p> <p>The analysis sufficiently links the data to the assertion of compliance</p> | <p>The data-driven analysis addresses all aspects of the requirements</p> <p>The analysis is comprehensive, insightful, thoughtful, clear, concise, and focused</p> <p>The analysis is exemplary in establishing the link between the data and the assertion</p> |
| <p>Presentation of the case</p> | <p>The presentation is unacceptable because it lacks organization, support documentation is unavailable, and provides no coherent analysis of issues nor any discussion of the institution's compliance</p> | <p>The presentation is not well-organized and difficult to follow. Not all links referenced were accessible. Information was available but difficult to find.</p> | <p>The presentation is well-organized, based on appropriate data, clearly and concisely written. The support documentation is easily accessible in a direct and user-friendly format</p> | <p>The presentation is well-organized, focused, clearly and concisely written. The analysis of the institution's assertion is outstanding and the quality of the data supporting its assertion is compelling. All supporting documentation is easily accessible</p> |
| <p>Overall judgment of the quality of the case</p> | <p>The case is not based on appropriate data; it offers little or no substantive analysis; it is not written clearly and concisely; it lacks focus; and it does not address all aspects of the requirement</p> | <p>XXXXXXXXXXXX</p> <p>XXXXXXXXXXXX</p> | <p>The clarity of the institution's assertion, the quality and accessibility of the data, the quality of the analysis, and the focus, organization, and quality of the writing are all sufficient</p> | <p>The case is exemplary because it is comprehensive, coherent, cogent, well-documented, well-organized. The analysis is thorough and demonstrates an understanding of the requirement.</p> |