

## **Institution and Team Guidance for ACCJC Standard I.B.3**

ACCJC Standard I. B. 3. reads: “The institution establishes institution-set standards for student achievement, appropriate to its mission, assesses how well it is achieving them in pursuit of continuous improvement, and publishes this information.”<sup>1</sup>

As the college prepares its Institutional Self Evaluation Report (ISER), and as the team evaluates the institution, the following should be considered:

1. This Standard envisions that an institution will determine key performance measures by which it will both monitor (floor) and challenge (aspirational goal) its overall effectiveness in terms of student achievement. Rather than cede to an external body the authority to determine acceptable levels of performance, an institution takes into account its mission, constituencies, and programs to determine its own appropriate levels of performance.
2. The measures the institution will use will be:
  - a. Summative measures of student achievement, including completion rates, course completion, retention, degrees and certificates awarded, and other measures chosen by the institution in keeping with its mission. At minimum, the standards will include those key performance metrics that are tracked and posted by the US Department of Education’s College Scorecard.
  - b. In keeping with the data definitions set by the system (if any) in which the institution operates.
  - c. Consistent in definition year-over-year to support meaningful trend analyses.
3. While baseline measures can be set by drawing on historic data, the institution will want to avoid viewing past performance as its future norm. The process for setting its standards should represent evidence that the institution, through extensive internal conversations, has envisioned making achievable improvements in these key measures. Making these measures broadly available to both internal and external constituencies, as required by the Standard, will help to focus institutional efforts to achieve them.
4. The process for setting institutional standards will include
  - a. An annual evaluation of the degree to which the institution has achieved them.
  - b. A determination in advance of the degree of substandard performance that will trigger specific planning to close the disproportional achievement gap.
  - c. A formal structure for focusing ongoing efforts to meet and exceed the institution’s achievement standards.

---

<sup>1</sup> USDE General Guidance on 602.16(a)(1)(i): Whether institutionally-developed standards to demonstrate student success are being used by the accreditor in the accreditation assessment, and if so, whether the agency has mechanisms in place to assess these standards in the context of the agency’s standards for accreditation.

For those accreditors whose accrediting standards for student achievement rely on accredited institutions to (1) demonstrate that the institution (on a recurring basis) collects student outcome data; (2) uses that data as part of conducting an institutional evaluation (assessment) of its success in meeting its institutional mission; and (3) uses the results of that evaluation in developing and implementing an institutional improvement plan --

\* Whether such accreditors are able to demonstrate that they have criteria/processes for evaluating the institutional assessment/improvement activity, such as criteria for evaluating the objectives/goals established by the institution; for assessing the data collection activities and improvement plans; and for assessing the outcomes resulting from implementation of the improvement plans.

5. In reviewing the institution under Standard I.B.3, teams will appraise the process by which the standards have been set, the appropriateness of the standards themselves in terms of the considerations noted above, the availability of the set standards to institutional constituencies, initiatives (if so required) that have been put in place by the annual review of achievement data intended to improve institutional performance in areas where standards are not met, and the achievable improvements planned by the institution to increase its performance (exceed achievement standards) in areas where standards are met.

# DRAFT for DISCUSSION PURPOSES

## Institutional and Team Guidance for ACCJC Standard I.B.6

ACCJC Standard I. B. 6. reads (in part), “The institution disaggregates and analyzes learning outcomes and achievement for subpopulations of students.”

When institutions are preparing their Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER), and when teams evaluate an institution’s compliance with this Standard, they should reference the following considerations:

1. The terms **learning outcomes** and **achievement** as used in this Standard should not be conflated as meaning the same thing or as being supported by the same evidence.
  - a. The concept of **learning outcomes** speaks to the actual learning resulting from a student’s active engagement with the curriculum. It describes the enhanced understandings, the acquisition of new knowledge and cognitive skills, as intended by the program faculty and as described in Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs). As such, learning outcomes are as varied as the programs they define; they are often narrative-based, or expressed in non-numeric terms, and require individual assessment of student work by faculty before meaningful comparisons among student subpopulations can be made.
  - b. The concept of **achievement** in this context speaks to summative markers of accomplishments such as students earning a degree or certificate, transferring to the next level of education, or completing a course of study. As such, achievement can often be reported by numeric values and data sets that are largely common across institutions and can be compared among institutions and among subcategories of learners.
2. Institutions have been obtaining and reporting **achievement** data for some time, as with IPEDS reporting on graduation rates and in their annual reports to ACCJC and other agencies. In most cases, data sets are defined and agreed upon by all participants. The resulting information can be disaggregated and readily used for comparative purposes.
3. By contrast, acquiring, reporting, and using data on **learning outcomes** does not as readily lend itself to a singular definition of data sets or to a reporting template that is common among institutions or even among programs within a college. In reviewing Standard I.B.6 (as well as the reference to disaggregation of **learning outcomes** data in Standard I.B.5), teams should bring the following perspectives to their appraisal:
  - a. Documenting and disaggregating **learning outcomes** is recognized by the ACCJC as an area that emphasizes innovative approaches that best meet an institution’s needs. ACCJC member institutions have developed varied approaches that utilize their available data systems and that are adaptive to their distinctive programs and student populations. Institutions are disaggregating their data by a variety of sub-categories such as by levels of preparation, instructional modality (online/on-ground), demographics such as ethnicity and socio-economic status, and other categories that best serve their missions.

- b. In any case, no single model or approach should be deemed as the basis for making a recommendation. Institutions should, however, use any relevant indicators of differential achievement to prompt planning for closing these gaps.
  - c. Teams can foster innovative practices by bringing a receptive eye to promising ones that work on behalf of increased student learning and that may be worth sharing with the larger ACCJC learning community.
- 4. Teams should continue to encourage faculty to become more precise in their development of assessable learning outcomes at the course and program levels. Disaggregation of learning outcomes data at the program and institutional levels provides institutions relevant information as to where learning gaps may exist. Strategies such as the use of rubrics and inter-rater reliability exercises among faculty may generate more meaningful data and facilitate in making subpopulation comparisons of learning outcomes within their institutions and with external stakeholders to foster the improvement of learning.
- 5. When making recommendations, teams may consider that institutional processes for disaggregation of SLO data are less likely to be sustainable if they are not linked to other key processes that are important to the institution, such as for its equity agenda or for program reviews. Teams should support meaningful analyses that contribute to institutional improvement.

The Commission recognizes that member institutions are still in varying stages of implementation with disaggregating learning outcomes. The Commission has determined, at the present time, it will not give compliance recommendations on this aspect of the standard requiring disaggregation of student learning outcomes.