

ACCJC NEWS

ACCREDITING COMMISSION FOR COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES,
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Fall 2015

TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ABOUT
INSTITUTION-SET STANDARDS

Test Your Knowledge about Institution-Set Standards

True/False

1. Institution-set standards come from the Higher Education Act and from federal regulations.
2. The concept of institution-set standards for student achievement has been around since 1965.
3. The questions in the 2014 and 2015 Annual Reports contain the components of institution-set standards that ACCJC will evaluate in institutional reviews.
4. Institutions are required to have institution-set standards across all data elements it uses in institutional self evaluation and continuous improvement.
5. Institution-set standards provide a means for institutions to evaluate success with respect to student achievement, at both the institutional and programmatic levels.

Turn upside down for answers below.

Answers

1. True. Institution-set standards come out of the requirement that accreditors evaluate the quality of the institution as to success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution's mission. The evaluation of student achievement performance may include different standards for different programs, as established by the institution, and will include, among others: course completion, job placement rates, and state licensing examination results as appropriate. HEA Section 496, 20 U.S.C. 1099B, 34 C.F.R. § 602.16(1)(i). See also 34 C.F.R. § 602.17 (a)(2).
2. False. This concept was not a part of the Higher Education Act enacted in 1965. USDE regulatory language underwent changes in 2010 and 2011 following revisions to the HEA. Among the changes was the concept of having different standards for different programs, established by the institution, related to evaluation of success with respect to student achievement. The USDE Accreditation Group staff briefed accreditors on their interpretation of these new requirements in fall 2012, and in response, the ACCJC sent a notification to the field in January 2013.
3. False. Accreditation Standards I.A. and I.B. express the expectation that the institution will establish institution-set standards for student achievement which are reflective of the full mission and intended student body. The ACCJC Annual Report and Annual Fiscal Report request certain information from member institutions, but they do not include every component contained in the Accreditation Standards. Under federal regulations (34 C.F.R. § 602.19(b)), accreditors are required to request periodic reports and collect and analyze key data and indicators which include fiscal information and measures of student achievement. The method of collecting and analyzing data must trigger follow-up by the accreditor for ensuring Accreditation Standards are being met. The ACCJC has identified three key data areas for monitoring related to institution-set standards in the Annual Report. They include course completion (institution-wide), job placement rates, and licensure/examination passage rates. The institution's self evaluation and continuous improvement process, and external team evaluations, will look at the broader configuration of institution-set standards, and disaggregated results to facilitate improvement efforts.
4. False. While an institution should have institution-set standards reflective of its full mission and the students it serves, there is no expectation that institutions will have institution-set standards for every data element it analyzes during ongoing operations, program review, or institution-wide planning. Institutions evaluate all kinds of demographic, environmental, and operational data as a part of their ongoing performance analysis. Not all of these data pertain directly to student success, and others might not be determined by the institution to be key indicators for evaluation purposes. The ACCJC's *Guide to Evaluating and Improving Institutions* identifies numerous areas of demographic and performance data which should be included in the Institutional Self-Evaluation Report (ISER). Some of this data is collected and analyzed in the Annual Report, without being linked to specific institution-set standards.
5. True. The institution-set standards provide definitions for the institution's goals and objectives which specifically pertain to student achievement results. The institution will have additional goals related to operations, and will also be deeply involved in the assessment and support of student learning. Together, these will provide key information to the institution related to academic quality and institutional effectiveness as the context for examining its practices and processes.