

Framework of the Accreditation Standards

Standard One: Mission, Core Themes, Goals, and Outcomes

The institution defines its context, characteristics, philosophy, and purpose which result in a coherent and widely understood statement of its mission. It partitions that mission into clearly delineated core themes*. The mission, and each core theme within that mission, is broadly communicated to communities of interest. Goals and intended outcomes, with assessable indicators of achievement, are identified and published for its mission and for each of the core themes. Assessment against these indicators is used to determine institutional effectiveness in fulfilling its mission and achieving its core themes' goals and intended outcomes and provides the framework to guide institutional improvement.

*A core theme is a manifestation of a fundamental aspect of institutional mission with an overarching common purpose that guides planning for programs and services, development of capacity, and application of resources to fulfill that aspect of the mission. Examples include, but are not limited to: Developmental education; workforce preparation; lower division transfer education; baccalaureate education; graduate preparation for professional practice; graduate preparation for scholarship and research; service; spiritual formation; student life; preservation of values and culture; personal enrichment; continuing education; academic scholarship; and research to discover, expand, or apply knowledge.

Framing Principles:

- The institution defines and articulates its mission, and the core themes within its mission, which reflect purpose and characteristics appropriate for an institution of higher learning and the programs and services it offers.
- The institution establishes goals and intended outcomes, with assessable indicators of achievement, for its mission and each of its core themes. The goals and intended outcomes give direction for institutional planning and implementation, resource allocation, and capacity development and the indicators of achievement serve as the criteria for evaluating institutional effectiveness.
- The institution's mission and goals are reviewed regularly through a collaborative process, formally adopted by the governing board, broadly published, and generally understood and accepted by its constituents.

Standard Two: Resources and Capacity

The institution documents that it possesses the essential conditions necessary to fulfill its objectives. Its human, fiscal, technical, student support, library and information services, and physical infrastructures provide evidence of its potential to achieve its goals, sustain its accomplishments, and fulfill its mission.

Framing Principles:

- The institution employs personnel (faculty, staff, and administrators) who are appropriately qualified, sufficient in numbers, and effective in fulfilling their defined responsibilities.

- The institution operates within a system of governance that facilitates the successful accomplishment of its mission and goals. Roles, responsibilities, and authority within the governance system are clearly defined, assigned, and communicated. Provision is made for appropriate involvement of constituencies, especially on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest.
- The institution adopts and adheres to policies and procedures that are disclosed and communicated forthrightly, clearly, and consistently to affected parties and the public.
- Consistent with its educational philosophy and programs, the institution provides programs and services for students that support their educational development and success.
- The institution provides accessible, adequate, and appropriate library and information resources to facilitate successful accomplishment of its mission and goals.
- The institution's fiscal resources are adequate to support the achievement of mission and goals. Its financial management infrastructure ensures the integrity of acquisition and expenditure of finances, maintains appropriate control mechanisms, and provides data and reports to enable meaningful decision-making.
- The institution's technology infrastructure and technical support are adequate and appropriate for its mission and goals.
- The institution's physical facilities and equipment are accessible, appropriate, and adequate in quantity and quality to support achievement of its mission and goals.

Standard Three: Planning and Implementation

The institution establishes and implements purposeful plans to fulfill its mission and achieve the goals and intended outcomes of its core themes. Developed collaboratively and appropriately with input from affected stakeholders, those plans influence institutional practice by providing direction for resource allocation and decision making. Planning reflects the interdependent nature of the programs, services, and operations of the institution. It includes contingencies for unanticipated circumstances that impact the institution's capacity to fulfill its mission and achieve its goals.

Framing Principles:

- Based on its mission and goals, the institution develops, operationalizes, and reviews regularly a strategic plan that guides institutional direction, sets priorities, articulates expectations, and aligns institutional resources and capacity to fulfill those expectations.
- The institution sets forth a clearly defined and widely communicated plan to evaluate its effectiveness in fulfilling its mission.
- The institution conducts comprehensive fiscal, personnel, technology, facilities, security, and disaster recovery planning and demonstrates the viability of such plans.

For each core theme:

- The institution engages in ongoing, systemic, integrated core-theme-based planning that integrates with its strategic plan and assures the adequacy and alignment of resources and capacity to achieve goals and intended outcomes.
- The institution articulates a clearly defined and widely communicated plan to assess achievement of core theme goals and intended outcomes.
- Policies are aligned with goals and intended outcomes, clearly stated, regularly evaluated, consistently applied, and revised as needed.
- For education programs:
 - Program goals and intended student learning outcomes, each with assessable indicators of achievement, are explicitly stated and widely published.
 - A plan to evaluate student achievement of intended learning outcomes is clearly defined and implemented.
 - The curriculum is appropriate for degree designations, overseen by faculty, intentionally planned, coherent, and approved and implemented through designated bodies and processes.
 - Applied programs intended for direct employment in the workplace include a component of general education-related instruction aligned with and supportive of the program's goals and intended outcomes.
 - Undergraduate baccalaureate degree programs and transfer associate degree programs include a coherent and articulated core of general education covering the major domains of knowledge that prepares students for independent lifelong learning.
 - Graduate programs are well defined, rigorous, and appropriate for degree designators.
- The institution evidences high ethical and professional standards in its policies, publications, representations, and conduct.
- The institution demonstrates a commitment to access for persons with mobility impairment and/or other disabilities.

Standard Four: Effectiveness and Improvement

The institution engages in systematic ongoing assessment and evaluation of its effectiveness in achieving goals and intended outcomes of its core themes. It collects data related to its indicators of achievement, analyzes those data, forms evidence-based judgments of effectiveness, and uses the results to effect improvement.

Framing Principles:

For each core theme:

- The institution conducts ongoing purposeful assessment of achievement of goals and intended outcomes through regular and systematic collection of relevant and meaningful data.
- Effectiveness in achieving goals and intended outcomes is determined through analysis of assessment data and publicly disseminated.
- Assessment results and determinations of effectiveness are distributed to appropriate constituencies and used for improvement by evaluating interrelationships and contributions of resources, capacity, planning, and implementation to achievement of goals and intended outcomes.
- For academic programs, purposeful and meaningful assessment of student achievement of intended outcomes is conducted regularly and systematically in accordance with a clearly articulated assessment plan. Results of student learning assessment are published publically and used to inform curriculum, pedagogy, and student engagement activities.
- All employees are evaluated on a regular and systematic basis through policy-guided processes to assess their effectiveness relative to their roles and responsibilities.

Standard Five: Mission Fulfillment, Sustainability, and Adaptation

The institution forms and publishes judgments regarding fulfillment of its mission. It regularly monitors its internal and external environments to determine how and to what degree changes impact the institution's mission and its ability to fulfill that mission. The institution demonstrates a capability to adapt as appropriate its mission and practices to accommodate changing and emerging needs, trends, and influences to ensure enduring relevancy, productivity, sustainability, and viability.

Framing Principles:

- The institution evaluates fulfillment of its mission by analyzing and synthesizing its effectiveness in achieving the goals and intended outcomes of its core themes.
- The institution conducts internal and external environmental scans to identify current and emerging trends, themes, and patterns with the potential to influence its mission and goals. It revises as necessary its mission, strategic and operational plans, core themes, programs, services, goals, and intended outcomes to assure stability, adaptability, and sustainability of institutional achievements.
- The institution maintains an active program of internal self regulation to ensure compliance with governing and operational laws, regulations, and policies.

Septennial Accreditation Process

STANDARD	YEAR	ACTIVITY
Standard One: Mission, Core Themes, Goals, and Outcomes	1	Report on Standard One Report reviewed by committee of evaluators. Findings forwarded to Board of Commissioners.
Standard Two: Resources and Capacity	3	Expand Report on Standard One to Include Standard Two with a Visit to Address Standards One and Two
Standard Three: Planning and Implementation; Standard Four: Effectiveness and Improvement	5	Expand Report on Standards One and Two to Include Standards Three and Four Report reviewed by committee of evaluators with particular attention to Standards Three and Four. Findings forwarded to Board of Commissioners.
Standard Five: Mission Fulfillment, Sustainability, and Adaptation	7	Expand Report on Standards One, Two, Three, and Four to Include Standard Five with a Visit to Address Standards Three, Four, and Five

DRAFT Accreditation Process

UAF has a self-study due in early 2011, and will have a site visit in Fall 2011. NWCCU has a new accreditation process and standards. The new accreditation process would normally take seven years to complete, but UAF will need to complete it in the next two years. As yet, detailed standards have not been prepared; all that is available is an outline. The new standards are projected to be complete in February 2010.

The new NWCCU accreditation process can be summarized as 'plan, implement, assess, improve'. The accreditation process is based on UAF's mission, and our report to the commission must show that we are fulfilling our mission. Documentation is essential at each step. So goals, plans and their implementation need to be developed with those requirements in mind.

The first step ("Standard One") is to identify and communicate a clearly defined institutional mission and core themes within that mission. (Themes are simply the most important parts of the mission). "Institutions are expected to identify goals and intended outcomes, each with assessable indicators of achievement, for its mission and for [each of] its core themes. These indicators are the foundation for assessment of achievements and effectiveness". (NWCCU accreditation workshop materials)

A. Process for Standard One:

1. A UAF wide committee will be selected, to identify the themes, and associated goals and outcomes, and develop the assessment plan including indicators. In doing this they need to use existing planning documents (recall, our last full accreditation review was in 2001), but they should also modify the theme and goals as needed to reflect changes in the institution. Also, the earlier documents were not written with this new accreditation process in mind, and so we need to think how to recast the themes and goals so that we can do the required assessment and analysis.

The UAF-wide committee members would consist of Dean of the Graduate School, Assistant Provost (representing General Studies and cross-university student success initiatives), and one representative from each school or college or research institute or CES (senior faculty who is also a member of the unit committee, described below) and the Library and the Museum, plus a representative from Faculty Senate, staff council, and ASUAF plus staff from critical areas (admissions and advising center, IT).

Examples of themes include Research, Baccalaureate Education, Graduate Education, Workforce Development, Community-based Education, Outreach and Extension; obviously there will be areas of overlap, no matter what themes are chosen. We should aim for a limited number of themes, because each theme will be the focus of considerable effort and reporting. Research is clearly an important part of our mission but has not been a focus of accreditation reviews, before. The Provost and VCR are discussing how to best include it in this process.

2. School or college (or Library or Museum or research institute) committees will lead and coordinate accreditation efforts for their units. The composition will vary somewhat because of differences in unit organization, but one approach would be to include a faculty representative from each department (or equivalent), a couple of at large representatives, and appropriate staff such as recruiter, advisor, academic managers, etc. Their first task will be to help identify campuswide themes, goals, outcomes, and means of assessment. They will then need to decide how their unit contributes to each theme, and select a representative or representatives to each relevant theme group.

Standard One should be completed by the end of Fall semester 2009. However, themes, and some goals and outcomes, should be identified by the end of Spring 2009. This is important because the themes will structure much of the rest of the effort.

B. Process for Standard Two. Standard Two is similar to the old accreditation standards, in that it is a report on capacity in areas like faculty and facilities and support services. I anticipate that each unit committee will gather the required information and submit it to a writing committee selected from the Campuswide committee. The writing committee will be charged with the summary and analysis. Analysis needs to focus on how capacity is or is not sufficient to allow UAF to fulfill its mission, as expanded by the themes, and goals.

C. Process for Standards 3-4. The Campuswide committee (above) will organize itself into subcommittees for each Theme, since the reports are organized by themes. The members of the subcommittees will be part of the larger Theme groups (that include Unit representatives), and provide the connection between these committees and the Campuswide group.

The Standard Three document would need to include elaborated goals; an implementation plan, and an assessment plan for each Theme.

Theme groups need to identify cross-cutting issues from the unit inputs, and make sure they are addressed as appropriate for a particular theme. For example:

- a. Retention and especially graduation rates.
 - b. Core curriculum (will have input from existing committee)
 - c. Interdisciplinary programs
 - d. 'General Studies' students
 - e. Undergraduate research
 - f. Honors and special programs
 - g. Advising (input from Transition committee)
 - h. IT, libraries and other academic infrastructure issues
- Etc.

D. Process for Standard Five: This section is intended to build upon all of the previous work to provide a summative evaluation of how well the University is fulfilling its mission, whether it can sustain its performance in the future, and whether and how it can adapt to change. This section will be the responsibility of a subcommittee of the Campuswide committee, but will be discussed and reviewed by the whole group.