

Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) Guide

Contents

Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation Overview	2
History and Rationale	2
General Description	2
Review Process	3
Eligibility	5
Institutions	5
Criteria	5
Core Commitment: Student Learning and Success	5
Core Commitment: Quality and Improvement	6
Core Commitment: Institutional Integrity, Sustainability and Accountability	6
Eligibility Criteria Checklist for Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation	7
Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation: Guidelines for Submission of Themes	9
Themes as Areas of Study	9
Format for Submission of Themes	9
Length of Submission	10
Review of Submissions	10
Examples of Themes	11
Deadline for Submission	12
Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation Institutional Report	12
Self-Study and Preparation	12
Opportunities for Guidance	12
Description of the Self-Study	12
The Institutional Report	13
Overview	13
Length of Report and Citation of Standards	14
Components of the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation Institutional Report	14
Appendices	17
Tips for Providing Evidence	17
Submission of Institutional Report	17
Interactions with Evaluation Teams, WSCUC Staff and the Commission	17

Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation Overview

History and Rationale

The Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) was created and motivated by several forces: WSCUC's regular review and refinement of the handbook and standards; a need to respond to a national conversation on ways to improve peer review accreditation; and a means to address recommendations issued by several national organizations. A consistent theme was that not all institutions should be subject to the same review process since they exist on a continuum of risk for being out of compliance and possibly losing accreditation. As a result, the Commission decided to offer a risk-sensitive approach for reaffirmation of accreditation in addition to the current Institutional Review Process (IRP).

The thematic approach of the TPR permits institutions to identify areas of study that align with the WSCUC Standards to demonstrate educational improvement. **In the TPR, institutions provide evidence of compliance with WSCUC Standards and federal requirements and address one or more self-selected themes, in lieu of responding to all of the Components in the current IRP.**

Consistent with the recommendation from an American Council on Education (ACE) report on accreditation, this pathway puts into place a mechanism that enables WSCUC “to screen institutions in ways that assess key performance indicators and the levels of attendant risk and to calibrate the nature and extent of the accreditation review accordingly” (American Council on Education. (2012). *Assuring academic quality in the 21st century: Self-regulation in a new era*. Retrieved from <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Accreditation-TaskForce-revised-070512.pdf>). Only those institutions with consistent evidence of a **healthy fiscal condition, strong student achievement indicators, and sustained quality performance** will be eligible for this process for reaffirmation.

The benefits of this process are many. While many WSCUC institutions continuously engage in a process of self-review and educational improvement, those institutions with strong performance in all three areas noted above (fiscal, student outcomes, and quality performance) benefit from TPR as the themes they select will emerge from what they identify as needing further improvement or study. TPR also allows these institutions to demonstrate what they are doing to enhance educational quality within the context of their own institutional goals and mission. In addition, this pathway allows WSCUC to better deploy its resources toward the specific needs of those institutions that most benefit from the existing IRP.

General Description

The TPR is a review process for reaffirmation, and is an alternative to the one described in the *2013 Handbook of Accreditation*. Institutions, identified on a case-by-case basis, have the opportunity to demonstrate compliance with all Standards through a document review, completing Component 2 of the current institutional review process, and then undertake a self-study that focuses on a topic or topics chosen by the institution and related to one or more of the standards, completing Component 8. In addition, the institution completes

Component 1 to provide a brief overview of the institution and its response to previous Commission recommendations. Finally, the institution also completes Component 9 to provide a conclusion and opportunity for reflection on the self study. **The institution will not need to complete Components 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7.** Details by Component include:

Component 1: Introduction. Institutions will briefly describe the institution, significant changes since the last accreditation review, and the institution's response to past Commission recommendations.

Component 2: Compliance with Standards. Institutions will complete the "Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators" (IEEI) and the "Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms."

Component 8: Institution-Specific Themes. Institutions will concentrate their attention on themes they select: those areas they deem most important and/or in which they seek to improve without undertaking a comprehensive analysis of all of their institutional programs and services. In Component 2, the institution will provide documentation relative to Standards and federal requirements not addressed within its institution-specific theme(s).

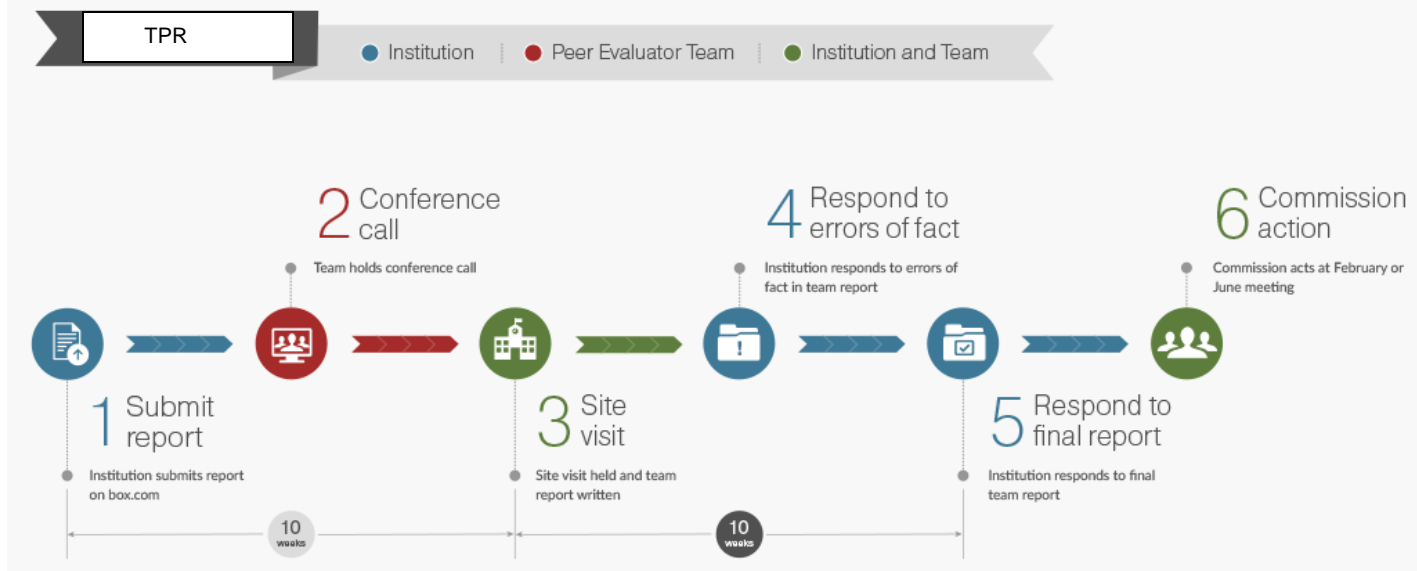
Component 9: Conclusion. Institutions assess the impact of the self-study, reflect on what they have learned in the course of the self-study, and discuss what they plan to do next.

Institutions that participate in the TPR are also required to complete the Annual Report and participate in the Mid-Cycle Review, as is required of all institutions.

Review Process

The review process is a streamlined version of the current Offsite Review (OSR) and Accreditation Visit (AV) and is as rigorous as the current institutional review process. A single team conducts both the documents' review and the site visit, without a six-month lag between OSR and AV as in the normal reaffirmation review process. A team of peers reviews the institution's response to past Commission recommendations (Component 1), the institution's compliance with the Standards and federal requirements and its response to the IEEI (Component 2), the institution's analysis of areas it has defined for itself as being most important or needing improvement (Component 8), and its conclusions (Component 9).

The time line for the TPR review process is depicted in the graphic below.



The chart below summarizes the differences between the usual institutional review process and the streamlined TPR review process:

Elements	Current Institutional Review Process	Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR)
Document(s) prepared by institution	The institutional report, appendices showing evidence, and often additional evidence in response to Lines of Inquiry.	The institutional report and appendices.
Required Components (evidence for reaffirmation of accreditation) for institutional and team reports	Components 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9 (and one optional Component--8)	Components 1, 2, 8, and 9
Interval between OSR and AV	Six months	None
Number of days team spends together reviewing the institution	Four days: one day for Offsite Review (OSR) and three days for onsite Accreditation Visit (AV)	Up to three days for site visit
Number of team trips	Two trips (one for OSR to WSCUC office in Alameda and one for AV to institution)	One trip to institution

Eligibility

Institutions

Up to three years in advance of the date of an institution's scheduled Offsite Review, WSCUC will inquiry of those institutions that were reaffirmed for nine or ten years whether they wish to be considered for the TPR. Institutions that are scheduled for reaffirmation in spring 2022 or later and were not reaffirmed for nine or ten years can petition the Commission to make their case for the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation.

For those institutions that express an interest in the TPR, WSCUC staff conducts an analysis to determine the institution's eligibility. Proposed eligible institutions are placed on a Commission consent agenda. The Commission may remove or add institutions, as it deems appropriate. The Commission's determination of which institutions are eligible for the TPR is final. There is no appeals process. Eighteen to 24 months before the date of their Accreditation Visit, institutions approved for the TPR create a brief document identifying theme(s) that will be addressed in Component 8, the rationale for selecting the theme(s), and the link between each theme and a Standard, Core Commitment, and/or Criteria for Review (CFR). Document length will not exceed seven pages. WSCUC staff reviews and approves proposed theme(s), in consultation with the institution.

Criteria

To be eligible for the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation institutions must meet certain criteria that are derived from the three Core Commitments, as described in the *Handbook of Accreditation*, and from their past accreditation history and interactions with WSCUC. These criteria rely on existing data sources; no new data are requested of institutions. Note: The criteria listed below are merely initial screening indicators and are not designed to encompass the totality of each Core Commitment. Each institution will be reviewed on these criteria by WSCUC staff to determine eligibility.

Core Commitment: Student Learning and Success

"Institutions have clear educational goals and student learning outcomes. Institutions collect, analyze, and interpret valid and reliable evidence of learning as a way of assessing student achievement and success. Institutions support the success of all students and seek to understand and improve student success."

- **Compliance with CFR 1.2.** CFR 1.2 requires that institutions regularly generate, evaluate and make public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning.
- **Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators (IEEI).** The IEEI shows whether an institution collects and uses evidence of student learning and performance for improvement.
- **Undergraduate retention/graduation rates.**
- **Graduate retention/graduation rates.**
- **Previous Commission action letter for reaffirmation.** WSCUC staff will confirm that the letter does not indicate any significant issues with student

learning and success.

Core Commitment: Quality and Improvement

“Institutions are committed to high standards of quality in all of their educational activities. They use appropriate evidence to improve teaching, learning and overall educational effectiveness. Through strategic and integrated planning, institutions demonstrate the capacity to fulfill their current commitments and future needs and opportunities.”

- **IEEI.** The IEEI shows whether an institution has regularly scheduled program reviews for its degree programs and whether an institution collects and uses evidence of student learning and performance for improvement.
- **Strategic plan.** The institution’s strategic plan will be reviewed to verify that the institution has an ongoing process for strategic planning.
- **Previous Commission action letter for reaffirmation.** WSCUC staff will confirm that the letter does not indicate any significant issues with quality and improvement.

Core Commitment: Institutional Integrity, Sustainability and Accountability

“Institutions recognize that the public has entrusted them with the critical responsibilities of upholding the values of higher education and contributing to the public good. They engage in sound business practices, demonstrate institutional integrity, operate in a transparent manner, and adapt to changing conditions.”

The criteria listed below include financial indicators used by the US Department of Education to monitor the status of institutions.

- **Cohort default rate.** The institution’s three-year cohort default rate must be 5% or less for an institution to be considered.
- **Composite financial index.** The institution’s composite score for the last three years must be greater than 1.5 to be considered.
- **Heightened Cash Monitoring.** Institutions appearing on the US Department of Education watch list (HCM 1 or HCM 2) will not be eligible.
- **Enrollment patterns.** Enrollment increases or decreases of greater than 20% will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether an institution could be eligible.
- **Previous Commission action letter for reaffirmation.** WSCUC staff will confirm that the letter does not indicate any significant issues with integrity, financial viability, governance, and accountability.

Accreditation History and Interactions with WSCUC

- **Length of time of last reaffirmation.** Only institutions receiving nine or ten years (until 2026) or ten years (after 2026) are invited to apply for the TPR. Institutions scheduled for reaffirmation in spring 2022 or later that can demonstrate considerable strength in the stated criteria—student outcomes,

quality performance, and financial sustainability—may petition the Commission for consideration.

- **Formal Notice of Concern or Sanctions.** Institutions issued a Formal Notice of Concern or Sanction since their last interaction with WSCUC will be ineligible.
- **Interactions with WSCUC in the interval between reaffirmations: special visits, interim reports, progress reports.** These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine eligibility.
- **Signs of instability from the WSCUC database.** High turnover in senior leadership or significant changes in offsite locations may render an institution ineligible.
- **Results of the Mid-Cycle Review.** WSCUC staff will examine the results of the MCR to determine whether any indicators would deem an institution ineligible.
- **Substantive Change and Structural Change history.** Problematic substantive change proposals or a recent structural change that involved change of legal status, ownership or control (within the last three years) may make an institution ineligible for the TPR.

The table below summarizes the eligibility criteria for the TPR.

Eligibility Criteria Checklist for Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation

CFR 1.2	
Does the institution meet CFR 1.2 (publicly presents on its website retention and graduation data and evidence of student learning)?	Yes / No
Strategic Plan	
Does the institution engage in an ongoing process of strategic planning?	Yes / No
Undergraduate Retention/Graduation Rates	
What is the institution's four-year graduation rate (IPEDS)?	
What is the institution's six-year graduation rate (IPEDS)?	
What are the disaggregated rates (IPEDS)?	
What is the institution's Absolute Graduation Rate (WSCUC Graduation Rate Dashboard)?	
Graduate Retention/Graduation Rates	
What is the institution's graduation rate or completion rate? (aggregated and disaggregated)	
Does the institution distinguish between masters and doctoral rates?	Yes / No
Financial Indicators	
What is the institution's cohort default rate?	
What is the institution's composite financial index?	
Is the institution on the Department of Education's Heightened Cash Monitoring list?	Yes / No
Enrollment Change	

Has enrollment increased or decreased substantially over the last three years?	Yes / No
If so, by how much?	
Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators	
Do all programs have learning outcomes?	Yes / No
Do all programs have and consistently use assessment of student learning?	Yes / No
Does the General Education program, if offered, have learning outcomes?	Yes / No
If so, have learning outcomes been assessed?	Yes / No
Do all programs have or have scheduled program review?	Yes / No
Interactions with WSCUC	
What is the length of time since the last reaffirmation?	years
Is the institution on Formal Notice of Concern or Sanction?	Yes / No
Has the institution had follow up requirements since the last reaffirmation (Special Visit, Interim Report, Progress Report)?	Yes / No
Have there been problematic substantive change proposals?	Yes / No
Has the institution undergone a structural change in the last three years?	Yes / No
Has the institution experienced instability in senior leadership?	Yes / No
Has the institution experienced significant changes in off-campus locations?	Yes / No
What are the results of the Mid Cycle Review, if available?	
Commission Letters	
Have there been Commission concerns about student learning, assessment, student success? (Core Commitment One)	Yes / No
Have there been Commission concerns about standards of quality, program review, educational effectiveness, improvement efforts? (Core Commitment Two)	Yes / No
Have there been Commission concerns about integrity, financial sustainability, governance, accountability? (Core Commitment Three)	Yes / No

Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation: Guidelines for Submission of Themes

Institutions approved to pursue the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation (TPR) process must submit their proposed themes to their WSCUC liaison for review. The themes establish a framework for connecting each institution's context and priorities with the Core Commitments and the Standards of Accreditation. Through the TPR, institutions can adapt the reaffirmation review to their context and accreditation history with WSCUC and demonstrate their response to the Standards. The intent is to promote significant institutional engagement and improvement on important issues, especially relating to student achievement and educational effectiveness. In identifying themes, institutions are encouraged to be creative, build on processes already in place, and focus on a limited number of key issues that can be addressed in depth.

Themes as Areas of Study

The approved TPR process states: "Institutions identify areas of study that align with the WSCUC Standards to demonstrate educational improvement."

1. "Areas of study" means that the institution is undertaking new or enhanced projects or activities for in-depth study. The Commission expects that the institution will identify researchable questions, select a methodology for engaging with the topic, and carry out the investigation as a rigorous research-based study.
2. "Areas of study" does not mean that a project or activity must be completely new. It could be an expansion of an existing project, activity, or initiative. It could also be an assessment or evaluation of an existing project, activity, or initiative. The liaison will be looking to determine that the themes represent an important effort tied to WSCUC Standards.
3. As an institution develops its themes, consider that the Commission emphasizes accountability and outcomes.
4. Themes must be tied explicitly to the Standards and relevant CFRs.

Format for Submission of Themes

The submission should be organized according to the following sections:

1. Executive summary: a brief high-level overview of the themes and their importance to the institution
2. Overview of the institution: a brief description, not to exceed a few paragraphs, of the values, mission, and history of the institution
3. Process for the development of themes: a brief description, not to exceed a few paragraphs, of how themes were identified and who was involved in the process
4. Description of each theme:

- a. What is going to be undertaken?
 - b. Which specific Standards and CFRs are tied to the theme?
 - c. Why is it important for the institution to conduct this work (the rationale)?
 - d. What work, if any, has already been done in this area?
 - e. What specifically does the institution expect to accomplish and be able to report on in the institutional report?
 - i. What are the specific outcomes?
 - ii. What is the evidence that outcomes have been achieved?
 - iii. How have the results been used for improvement?
 - f. How will the project be assessed or evaluated?
5. Timeline for each theme:
- a. When does the project or activity begin (or when did it begin) and when is it expected to end?
 - b. What are the tentative deadlines for key milestones of this investigation?
 - c. Does it continue after the reaffirmation review?
 - d. As appropriate, how does the timing integrate with other complementary institutional activities?
6. Resources: what human and financial capital will be needed?
7. Institutional stipulation: signature of the institution's CEO, attesting that the project has her/his endorsement, on the Institutional Report Certification Form (available from the document list on the WSCUC website)

Length of Submission

The total submission should be 5- 7 pages.

Review of Submissions

WSCUC liaisons will review the institutional submissions in their portfolios using the following criteria:

1. To what extent do the themes address the Standards and CFRs?
2. To what extent has the institution demonstrated the importance of the themes?
3. To what extent will the projects lead to improvements in educational effectiveness, student achievement, or quality performance?
4. How realistic has the institution been in setting goals, outcomes and a timeline for completing the projects?
5. How achievable are the expected results?

The liaison may request additional information or suggest revisions to the submission, as needed. At the conclusion of the review process, the liaison will provide her/his institution with general comments from the reading of all the submitted proposals and with specific feedback about the institution's proposal. The liaison will confirm that the institution can proceed with the review for reaffirmation of accreditation. If a proposal is not sufficient to move forward, the liaison will work with the institution's ALO to revise the submission as

appropriate. The submission document will be shared with the peer evaluation team before the TPR Visit.

Examples of Themes

The following list provides some examples of themes that could be a basis for an institution's TPR:

- Components 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 of the current Institutional Review Process as described on pages 29 – 33 of the Handbook of Accreditation
 - Meaning, quality and integrity of degrees
 - Assessing students' core competencies and standards of performance at graduation
 - Student success and achievement
 - Assessing student learning
 - Program review
 - Use of data and evidence for decision-making
 - Responding to a changing higher education environment
 - Responding to the needs of adult learners through online and competency based learning
 - Strategic planning
 - Financial viability
 - Resource generation and allocation
- Curriculum
 - Revising general education or the core curriculum
 - Incorporating experiential learning/learning by doing/service learning/capstone courses into the curriculum
 - Expanding interdisciplinary learning
 - Adding undergraduate research opportunities into the curriculum
 - Promoting global awareness and intentional international engagement
 - Enhancing writing across the curriculum
 - Evaluating and strengthening the majors
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
 - Diversifying leadership, staff, faculty and board
 - Closing disparities in student achievement
 - Strengthening support programs
- Faculty
 - Promoting faculty engagement
 - Increasing responsiveness to student learners
 - Focusing on transformational scholarship
- Institutional Culture
 - Strengthening the culture of assessment
 - Infusing assessment results to support strategic planning and continuous improvement

- Improving institutional effectiveness and data systems
- Integrating planning, program review and budgeting

The TPR website has a brief description of themes from institutions that have been approved for a TPR review.

Deadline for Submission

ALOs should send theme submissions to their Vice President liaison as an email attachment at the date specified by WSCUC, typically eighteen to 24 months before the institution's scheduled TPR visit.

Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation Institutional Report

Self-Study and Preparation

Opportunities for Guidance

WSCUC is committed to supporting institutions as they prepare for the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation. There will be multiple opportunities for institutions to receive information and guidance in order to prepare for the review and visit. A TPR website with helpful information is available *click here*. (*under construction; stay tuned!*)

Academic Resource Conference

Every year, WSCUC sponsors the Academic Resource Conference (ARC), which includes workshops and panels on topics that institutions will find helpful.

Institutional consultations

Institutions should arrange an on-campus consultation with their WSCUC staff liaison. Objectives for this consultation include an orientation to the TPR process, a review of the institution's responses to previous Commission recommendations, and identification of the goals for the self-study, including strengths and areas of challenge. In addition, the WSCUC liaison is available to meet on-site with groups and individuals involved in the self-study and report writing process to clarify subsequent steps and strategies for the review. These may include, for example, how the institution will organize for the review, how various constituencies will be involved, and what resources will be required. The institution is expected to cover transportation and related costs of the liaison's visit to the campus.

Description of the Self-Study

The self-study is the institution's process of gathering data and reflecting on its current functioning and effectiveness under the Standards. A candid self-study, with broad engagement of the institutional community, provides the foundation for a high quality institutional report.

In preparation for the self-study, institutions are expected to review their accreditation history. This includes the most recent team report and all Commission action letters received since the last reaffirmation of accreditation; documents submitted to WSCUC since the last review for reaffirmation of accreditation; and WSCUC responses where applicable (e.g., recommendations related to substantive changes or an Interim Report).

Early in the self-study, the institution undertakes its review using the “Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms.” This worksheet offers a guide to the four Standards of Accreditation, the Criteria for Review under each Standard, and Guidelines. Although the TPR process requires that institutions only address Components 1, 2, 8, and 9, it is important to demonstrate compliance with all of the Standards when filling out the “Compliance under the WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms” document and to provide links to additional materials or relevant information in the form of additional narratives that teams will use to confirm compliance.

The “Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms” calls for information that has not been submitted with the institution’s Annual Report and that demonstrates compliance with several federal requirements accreditors are expected to monitor. For the federal requirements, institutions should provide links to additional materials or relevant information in the form of additional narratives that teams will use to confirm compliance.

The institution also completes the “Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators,” which provides a comprehensive overview of the institution’s assessment processes and will be updated for the Mid-Cycle Review.

The completed “Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms” and the “Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators,” with links to supporting documentation, are submitted as appendices with the institutional report.

After these initial steps, the focus of the self-study shifts to the specific Components that form the institutional report. These Components are described in detail below, along with prompts that can stimulate inquiry and reflection.

Another essential element at the outset of the self-study is practical planning for how the institution will launch and conduct the accreditation review. Such planning addresses the financial and human resources that will be needed, the structures that will support progress, the timeline and milestones that must be met, and metrics that are available or must be generated. To the extent possible, institutions are encouraged to make use of existing resources, e.g., standing committees, an assessment office, program review, and institutional research, before introducing new processes.

The Institutional Report

Overview

The institutional report is based on the findings of the institution’s self-study and institution-specific theme or themes, and must include the Components described below. The order for the Components follows:

- Introduction: Institutional Context; Response to Previous Commission Actions
- Compliance: “Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms”; “Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators”
- Institution-specific Theme(s)
- Conclusion: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

The required Components of the institutional report are described below.

Length of Report and Citation of Standards

The TPR institutional report narrative is approximately 40-60 pages in length, double-spaced, excluding appendices. See the “WSCUC Style Guide” for advice on writing institutional reports. In the table of contents and in body of the report, it is helpful to hyperlink to relevant documents in the appendices in order to support each assertion and to provide easy navigation for evaluators. References to the Standards of Accreditation and citations of specific CFRs are included, as appropriate, in the body of the report. It is not necessary to cite all the CFRs because some of these will have been addressed in the “Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms.” Instead, the institutional report can cite only those CFRs of direct relevance to the topic under discussion. When the institutional report is submitted, it should include a letter, signed by the president/chancellor, affirming the accuracy of the information presented and the institution’s intention to comply fully with WSCUC Standards and policies.

Components of the Thematic Pathway for Reaffirmation Institutional Report

Component 1

Introduction to the Institutional Report: Institutional Context; Response to Previous Commission Actions (CFR 1 .1, 1 .8)

This Component offers a succinct history of the institution and an overview of the institution’s capacity, infrastructure, and operations. Activities such as distance education, hybrid courses, and off-campus locations are integrated into this discussion. Special attention is given to significant changes since the last accreditation review, e.g., in mission, student demographics, structure, instructional modalities, finances, and other institution-level matters. This is also the place to provide a description of institutional values, the qualities of the educational experience that make graduates of this institution unique, how the institution is addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion, and how it is contributing to the public good. Themes are introduced here with an explanation of how they were selected. As part of this Component, the institution also reviews the most recent team report and Commission action letter(s) and responds to earlier Commission recommendations. As relevant, substantive change reviews, Annual and Interim Reports, and trends or patterns of complaints against the institution, if any, may be discussed. This overview of its accreditation history, operations, strengths, and challenges can help the institution identify issues and anticipate questions that evaluation team members may pose as the institutional review proceeds.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- What does the institution perceive as its strengths and challenges based, for example, on internal planning and evaluation?
- How does the institution demonstrate its contribution to the public good?
- What are the institution’s current priorities and plans?
- How did the institution prepare for this review? Who was involved? What was the process? How did this work connect with existing priorities and projects?
- What themes will be discussed later in the report?
- Has the institution provided any additional guidance that will help readers follow the organization of the report?

Component 2

Compliance with Standards: Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms; Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators

Federal law requires every institution coming under review for reaffirmation of accreditation to demonstrate that it is in compliance with the Standards and CFRs of the accrediting agency. In addition, the Commission requires that the institution have in place policies and procedures considered essential for sound academic practice. WSCUC provides two documents— “Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms”; and “Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators”—to assist institutions in reflecting and reporting on their compliance with these expectations. In addition, these documents will assist institutions in identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Institutions need to complete both forms and include them among the appendices that accompany the institutional report when it is submitted.

An analysis and discussion of the institution’s self-assessment and any plans emerging from these two exercises are discussed in the narrative for this Component of the institutional report. The “Compliance with WSCUC Standards” systematically walks the institution through each of WSCUC’s Standards, CFRs, and Guidelines and asks institutions to provide evidence of compliance. The required federal checklists provide the opportunity to show how it is meeting federal requirements. As part of the self-study, the “Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms” document and process can stimulate useful conversations about the institution’s strengths, weaknesses, and future efforts. Similarly, the “Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators” provides assurance that every degree program has in place a system for assessing, tracking, and improving the learning of its students. This worksheet can assist institutions in determining the extent to which they have effective assessment systems in place, and what additional efforts or processes they need to develop for continuous improvement. The IEEI will also be used as part of the Mid-Cycle Review, as institutions are requested to update the information for that review.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- Who participated in the “Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms”? What perspectives did different constituencies contribute?
- What was learned from completing this worksheet? What are the institution’s strengths and challenges? What issues and areas of improvement emerged?
- Who participated in the completion of the “Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators”? What perspectives did different constituencies contribute?
- What was learned from the “Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators”? What are the institution’s strengths and challenges? What issues and areas of improvement emerged?
- What plans are in place to address areas needing improvement? What resources, fiscal or otherwise, may be required?

Component 8

Institution-specific Theme(s) (CFRs as appropriate)

The accreditation review is an opportunity for institutions to align their own priorities with WSCUC’s quality improvement process. This theme-based approach to self-study offers institutions

the clearest opportunity for this kind of campus-wide engagement and improvement. In addition to addressing the two Components described above, institutions are expected to identify and study themes that are specific to the institution and of critical importance. The themes may emerge from institutional planning or other processes; in any case, themes should connect to the Standards.

Themes are introduced in Component 1. Origins of the theme, analysis, recommendations for action, and related steps are included in Component 8 and its appendices of the institutional report.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- How does the theme align with the Standards and CFRs?
- Is the theme consistent with what was in the theme(s) submission? If not, how has it changed?
- What has been the design and approach to investigate the theme?
- Has the investigation been implemented with rigor, searching questions, appropriate methodology, and effective use of evidence?
- What kinds of evidence have been collected?
- Moving beyond description, how has the institution analyzed evidence and reflected on the meaning of the results?
- How has the evidence been used to support further inquiry and improvement?
- What has been accomplished?
- Has the institution enhanced its understanding of the theme as a result of the investigation?
- What are the institution's analyses and conclusions about the theme?
- Did the investigation lead to specific recommendations and improvement efforts?

Component 9

Conclusion: Reflection and Plans for Improvement

In this concluding Component, the institution assesses the impact of the self-study, reflects on what it has learned in the course of the self-study, and discusses what it plans to do next.

Prompts: The following prompts may be helpful in getting started, but the institution is not required to follow these prompts or respond to them directly.

- What issues have emerged from the investigation of the theme?
- Were the original goals and outcomes described in the "Theme Submission Guide" achieved?
- What will be the next steps to address what has been learned?
- How will momentum be sustained?
- What changes have occurred in the institution as a result of this self-study?

Appendices

There are no page limits on appendices, which are included as part of the institutional report (named and numbered as Appendices) and support the narrative.

The appendices include the following items:

- A. Completed "Compliance with WSCUC Standards and Federal Requirements Worksheet and Forms."
- B. Completed "Inventory of Educational Effectiveness Indicators."
- C. Institution-selected appendices that support the institutional report's narrative.

By being selective about what to include, an institution can avoid excessive documentation, which can be challenging for institutions to collect and for evaluation team members and the Commission to read. Evaluation teams and the Commission do not want to be overwhelmed by numerous appendices and thousands of pages of supporting material. Please make sure that all appendices follow a consistent naming convention so that it is clear what they are, what section they refer to, and are cross referenced in the narrative. Appendices are preferred as PDFs.

Tips for Providing Evidence

- Put yourself in the place of a reviewer: what is the story that you need to tell? What evidence supports your story? What is extraneous and can be left out?
- Provide a representative sample of evidence on an issue, rather than ALL of the evidence.
- Consider including an executive summary or the most relevant points of supporting evidence, rather than the entire document.
- If you are referring to a specific page or set of pages in a handbook, manual, guide or document, include only those pages, not the entire document.
- If you are providing an excerpt of a document, include the title of the document, and a table of contents and/or a brief narrative to put the excerpt in context.
- If you provide a hyperlink to a web page, make sure the link takes the viewer directly to the relevant information on the page. Do not make your reviewer search for it.

Submission of Institutional Report

Institutional reports are uploaded into the Institutional Report folder in Box.Com. Specific instructions will be provided to the Accreditation Liaison Officer well in advance of the submission deadline.

Interactions with Evaluation Teams, WSCUC Staff and the Commission

Throughout the institutional review process, representatives of the institution interact with evaluation team members and WSCUC staff. Interaction with the Commission occurs at the end of the institutional review process when the Commission makes a decision about the institution's accreditation status.

The evaluation team, composed primarily of experienced educators from peer institutions as well as other experts identified to address specific needs of the institution, has the responsibility to evaluate the institution under the Standards of Accreditation. The evaluation team's work involves

the following: reading the institutional report, appendices, past Commission letters, and other documents; conducting the visit; and preparing a report of its findings and recommendations.

Every institution seeking reaffirmation of accreditation has a WSCUC staff liaison. The liaison, together with other staff members, provides support and guidance to the institution, the evaluation team, and the Commission throughout the review process.