



An Overview of the Reaffirmation of Accreditation Review Process

The Purpose and Process of Accreditation

- ◆ In 2001 the Commission on Colleges adopted the *Principles of Accreditation* that introduced significant changes in the approach to accreditation.
- ◆ The institution's effectiveness and its ability to create and sustain an environment that enhances student learning is the focus of this new approach.



The Purpose and Process of Accreditation



- ◆ Two of the paramount concepts of the accreditation process are the institution's commitment to quality enhancement and continuous improvement and its focus on student learning and its effectiveness in supporting and enhancing student learning.

Benefits of Internal Institutional Analysis

- ◆ Among these benefits are the institution's opportunity to develop a Quality Enhancement Plan that will deal with an issue or issues that are important to its entire community and that demonstrate promise of making a significant impact on the quality of student learning.

Quality Enhancement Plan

- ◆ The Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) is a document developed by the institution that describes a course of action for institutional improvement crucial to enhancing educational quality that is directly related to student learning.



Quality Enhancement Plan

- ◆ The QEP is based upon a comprehensive analysis of the effectiveness of the institution in supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution.

Schedule and Reporting Deadlines

- ◆ Year One ---2008
 - Orientation of Leadership Teams –second Monday in June
- ◆ Year Two ---2009
 - Compliance Certification due—September 10
 - Off—site review conducted---second week in November

Schedule and Reporting Deadlines

- ◆ Year Three---2009
 - Quality Enhancement Plan due—six weeks prior to the on-site review
 - On-site review conducted ---between mid January and the third week in April
 - Review by the Commission on Colleges—first week in December



The Role of Review Committees



- ◆ The On-Site Review Committee is charged with determining whether an institution is in compliance with Core Requirement Twelve (Quality Enhancement Plan).



The Role of Institutional Leadership

- ◆ The Commission on Colleges requires that institutions establish a Leadership Team to manage and validate the internal institutional assessment of compliance with all Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards.

The Role of Institutional Leadership

- ◆ The responsibilities of the Leadership Team include
 - Coordinating and managing the internal review process, including developing the structure and timelines for ensuring the timely completion of all tasks and attending the orientation session conducted by the Commission on Colleges. The orientation session is limited to four people and the institution's finance officer.

The Role of Institutional Leadership

- Overseeing the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan.
- ◆ The Leadership Team has the responsibility for overseeing the entire institutional review, including the production of the Quality Enhancement Plan.



The Role of Institutional Leadership



- ◆ Early in the institutional review, the process for developing the Quality Enhancement Plan should be outlined, a timeline for the completion of tasks established, and individuals and groups to be involved in the process selected.

The Quality Enhancement Plan

- ◆ Developing a Quality Enhancement Plan as a part of the reaffirmation process is an opportunity and impetus for the institution to enhance overall institutional quality and effectiveness by focusing on an issue or issues the institution considers important to improving student learning.

Nature and Purpose of the QEP

- ◆ The QEP describes a carefully designed and focused course of action that addresses a well-defined topic or issue(s) related to enhancing student learning.
- ◆ The QEP should complement the institution's ongoing integrated institution-wide planning and evaluation process.

Nature and Purpose of the QEP

- ◆ The QEP is forward-looking and transforms the accreditation process into an ongoing activity rather than an episodic event.
- ◆ Core Requirement 2.12 requires an institution to have a *plan* for increasing the effectiveness of some aspect of its educational program relating to student learning.

Nature and Purpose of the QEP

- ◆ The plan launches a process that can move the institution into a future characterized by creative, engaging, and meaningful learning experiences for students.
- ◆ Student learning is defined broadly in the context of the QEP and may address a wide range of topics or issues.



Student Learning and the QEP

- ◆ Student learning may include changes in students' knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or values that may be attributable to the collegiate experience.

Student Learning and the QEP

- ◆ Examples of topics or issues include, but are not limited to,
 - enhancing the academic climate for student learning,
 - strengthening the general studies curriculum,
 - developing creative approaches to experiential learning,
 - enhancing critical thinking skills,

Student Learning and the QEP

- Introducing innovative teaching and learning strategies
- Exploring imaginative ways to use technology in the curriculum.
- ◆ In all cases, the goals and evaluation strategies must be clearly and directly linked to improving the quality of student learning.

Institutional Support for the QEP

- ◆ The development of a QEP requires a significant commitment from the entire institutional community.
- ◆ Support for the QEP should be evident through
 - A consensus among key constituencies that the QEP can result in significant improvements in the quality of student learning

Institutional Support for the QEP

- Broad-based institutional participation in the identification of the topic or issue to be addressed by the QEP.
- Careful review of best practices related to the topic or issue.
- Implementation strategies that include a clear timeline and assignment of responsibilities.

Institutional Support for the QEP

- A structure established for evaluating the extent to which the goals set for the plan are attained.
- ◆ The processes for developing the QEP will differ among institutions.

Developing the QEP

- ◆ After the institution has identified the topic or issue, the Leadership Team may wish to assign the day-to-day responsibility for its development to a select group representing those individuals who have the greatest knowledge about and interest in the ideas, content, processes, and methodologies to be developed in the QEP; who have expertise in planning and assessment, and who have responsibility for managing and allocating institutional resources.

Identifying and Selecting the Focus for the QEP

- ◆ The Leadership Team may begin the process of selecting the focus for the QEP by conducting an education session designed to explain the nature and purpose of the QEP to members of the institutional community.

Identifying and Selecting the Focus for the QEP

- ◆ The Leadership Team may do some initial exploration and research that engages a limited number of faculty, administrators, and students about the topics for the QEP before involving the larger campus community.

Identifying and Selecting the Focus for the QEP

- ◆ Alternatively, the Leadership Team may engage a wide cross-section of the institution's constituents to discuss potential topics and then convene a smaller working group to determine the more focused topic(s).

Identifying and Selecting the Focus for the QEP

- ◆ There should be widespread participation by all institutional constituent groups—faculty, administrators, students, and perhaps alumni and trustees—in making the decision.

Identifying and Selecting the Focus for the QEP

- ◆ Since faculty members play an important role in student learning, they should be represented in the early phases of the development of the QEP.
- ◆ it is especially important for faculty members to agree that the issues identified for the focus of the QEP are significant.

Sources for the QEP

- ◆ An exploration of the institution's culture, strategic planning, goals, mission, and results of assessment could be conducted to determine whether an issue related to student learning emerges as a potential focus for the QEP.



Sources for the QEP

- ◆ Tapping into issues centered on student learning where there are already shared interests, concerns, and aspirations and where data have already been collected and analyzed can help the institution find a focus.

Sources for the QEP

- ◆ An institution can develop a QEP that extends, modifies, redirects, or strengthens an improvement that is already underway.
- ◆ If this option is chosen, the institution might very well have a QEP that is being implemented at the time of the site visit.

Sources for the QEP

- ◆ An institution might also develop a QEP that has been in the planning stages prior to its preparations for its reaffirmation.
- ◆ An institution may not submit a QEP that describes initiatives that are fully realized.



Sources for the QEP



- ◆ Institutions are encouraged to base their selection of the focus of the QEP on empirical data.
- ◆ The institution may wish to examine studies that have been done on best practices in higher education and other national and peer group data.

Sources for the QEP

- ◆ A QEP that arises from the solid base of a needs assessment will have more validity, credibility, and appeal than one that does not.
- ◆ The topic or issue should be sufficiently broad in scope to be viewed as significant but not so broad as to lack a well-defined focus.



Scope of the QEP



- ◆ The extent to which the QEP has affected student learning outcomes will be reported in the Impact Report submitted five years after the institution's last review.



Resources for the QEP

- ◆ It is extremely important for institutions to recognize that no QEP should require more resources than the institution can commit.
- ◆ There should be a realistic analysis of what is both desirable and possible.



Elements of the QEP

- ◆ The QEP may not exceed one hundred pages, including a narrative of no more than seventy-five pages and appendices of no more than twenty-five pages.

Elements of the QEP

- ◆ The QEP should include the following components:
 - A title
 - A topic
 - A definition of student learning
 - Evidence that developing the QEP has engaged all appropriate campus constituencies



Elements of the QEP

- A description of the importance of the QEP
- Specific, well-defined goals
- Evidence of careful analysis of the institutional context.
- A visible implementation plan
- A comprehensive evaluation plan

Time Need for Developing the QEP

- ◆ An institution should expect the focus and framework for the QEP to shift and evolve.
- ◆ An institution must be willing to experience substantial ambiguity and maintain flexibility in thinking.



Review of the QEP



- ◆ The On-Site Review Committee will evaluate the acceptability of the QEP on the following indicators:
 - Focus
 - Institutional capability
 - Assessment
 - Community involvement