Georgia Southern University

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Accreditation Update

Office of Institutional Assessment and
Accreditation

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Accreditation Update

Georgia Southern University

GEORGIA
SOUTHERN
UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT
AND ACCREDITATION

ACCREDITATION UPDATE

Your Roadmap to Successfully Navigating SACSCOC Reaffirmation of Accreditation

As part of our university-wide process to prepare for reaffirmation of accreditation with SACSCOC, we will share our milestones and next steps through this newsletter. The current edition provides a snapshot of where we are in the reaffirmation process, including details of our last Compliance Certification team meeting, a note from our Faculty Fellow on building a case for compliance, and a celebration of a few of our educational programs demonstrating excellence in assessment practices related to Standard 8.2.a.

Scroll to the bottom and click "Enter to Win" for your chance to win a prize for completing a short survey!

READY

To engage. To assess. To shine. To achieve Reaffirmation of Accreditation.

SACSCOC Reaffirmation of Accreditation

Weaving It All Together

On April 26, 2022, Compliance Certification Teams and members of the President's Cabinet came together for the last all team meeting for the 2021-2022 academic year. Teams have been busy this past year identifying sources of evidence and areas of need in preparation for Georgia Southern's 2025 SACSCOC reaffirmation. The focus of this meeting was our transition from Phase 2, information gathering, to Phase 3 where teams begin drafting Compliance Certification narratives in preparation for our internal review.

Dr. Delena Bell Gatch, Associate Vice President, Institutional Assessment and Accreditation (IAA), began the meeting with a presentation on building the case for compliance. The presentation highlighted the purpose of Compliance Certification narratives and important considerations for constructing narratives. She also outlined what teams could expect during the next phase of reaffirmation.

Essential to this process is the organization of collected evidence. Compliance Certification Team members will be using *Weave*, a higher education assessment and accreditation management software program. Ms. Jordan Denton, our *Weave* consultant, introduced the software platform. After ensuring team members could access *Weave*, Ms. Denton provided

a tour of the platform, highlighting helpful features that will aid in the organization of evidence and facilitate collaboration among team members.

The morning ended with some brief comments from the Provost, Dr. Carl Reiber, and Q&A session with the IAA Accreditation Team. Although teams were given the option to use the summer as a brief respite from accreditation activities, they also were told *Weave* would be available for those wanting to use the summer to jump start the construction of their Compliance Certification narratives. In Fall, it's off to the races as drafts are completed in preparation for our internal review.

PHASE 3: DRAFT SUBMISSION & INTERNAL REVIEW

Teams draft initial Compliance Certification narratives and revise narratives based upon an internal review in Phase 3.

Status: We are in Phase 3

Compliance Certification teams are identifying and gathering potential evidence to support compliance and are in the initial stages of drafting their narratives in Weave.
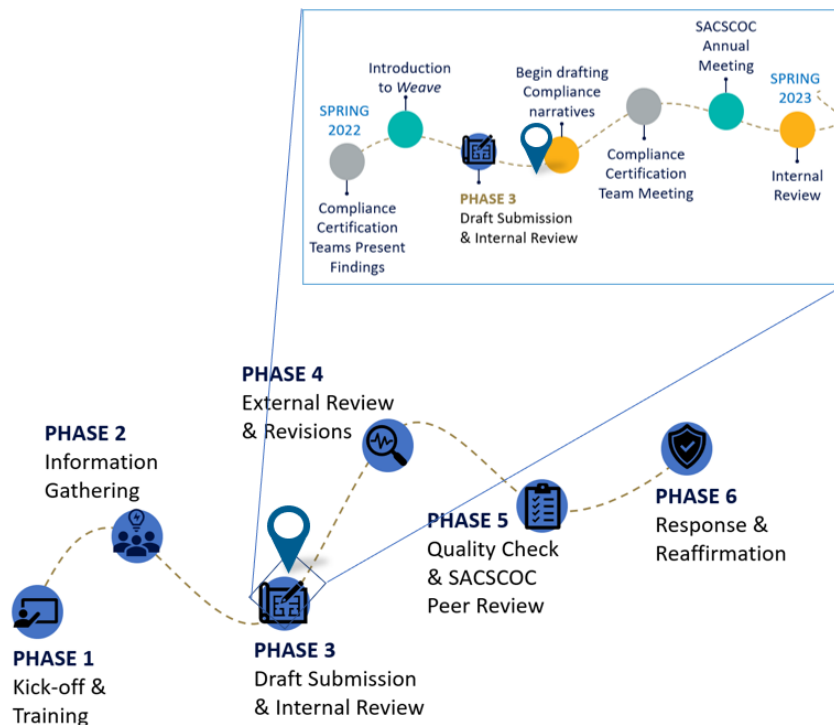
Building a Case for Compliance Part II:
A Word from the Faculty Fellow

Greetings!

In our last newsletter, we introduced the idea of building a case for compliance, i.e. constructing a narrative that demonstrates that Georgia Southern University's practices align with both our mission and SACSCOC's

Principles of Accreditation. Recall, the narrative is a blueprint of sorts where we analyze and connect our evidence to a judgment of compliance. For peer evaluators to agree with our judgment, we must convincingly present our case.

Just like a lawyer in a court, you want to make an opening argument that leads the evaluator to draw the same conclusion regarding Georgia Southern University's compliance with the standard. To make this case, you must introduce the standard, your judgment of compliance, and detail what you are going to present in support of your position. Before any evidence is presented, you first must provide a rationale for how terms in certain standards, e.g. "adequate" or "appropriate," have been defined in the context of our institution and its mission.

When presenting evidence, the challenge is making sure the reader does not get lost in a dense forest of information. A good argument is careful to provide a balance- be thorough but do not overload the reader. Importantly, the narrative should provide context and include key excerpts with links to full documents that are easily accessible and can be browsed as desired. If a standard requires policy and/or procedures, be certain to address approval, publication, and implementation of those policies and procedures. Don't digress. Stay focused on what is necessary to demonstrate compliance with the standard.

Visual cues are one way to help evaluators stay on course. Headers can be used to alert readers to what essential component of the standard is being addressed. Changes in text, e.g., bolding, italics, even color, can focus the reader's attention on vital information. In some instances, tables, charts, and other graphics might be appropriate. If included, demonstrate how they connect to your argument. Visual cues should not be limited to just the narrative. For example, if the narrative provides a link to a specific page in the faculty handbook, be certain to also highlight the specific passage or passages crucial to the standard.

To reach your destination, you still need a closing argument to recap your case and show that you indeed have accomplished what you set out to do. You have connected the evidence and clearly demonstrated how Georgia Southern's practices align with both the mission of the institution and SACSCOC's Principles of Accreditation.

As a reminder, the resource manual is an essential reference for guidance on how evidence should be presented and what evidence is crucial. It also provides questions for consideration to help write the narrative. When using the manual, check for interpretations or other updates that clarify current expectations regarding a standard. Other important resources are the forthcoming style guide and the SACSCOC rubric for Analyzing a Case for Compliance.

Until Next Time,

Barbara King
IAA Faculty Fellow

Did You Know?

SACSCOC accreditation is supported through a process of peer evaluation. This means that SACSCOC evaluators during our off-site review and on-site visit will be from SACSCOC member institutions outside of Georgia and are higher education professionals just like us! Serving as an evaluator for

SACSCOC is on a voluntary basis and requires considerable time and effort. We have some individuals at Georgia Southern who are trained and serve as peer evaluators for specific SACSCOC standards.

Each SACSCOC evaluator is permitted to use their professional judgment, in collaboration with others on the peer evaluation team, to determine if a standard is deemed compliant or if additional evidence is needed. Because individuals may not be familiar with our institution or the services we offer, it is important to clearly and efficiently communicate how each component of the standard is met. One way that the SACSCOC peer evaluators determine compliance as a team is through utilizing a shared rubric examining the institution's judgment of compliance, rationale, evidence, analysis and reflection on the evidence, and overall quality of the argument.

Section 8: Student Achievement

8.2.a The institution *identifies* expected outcomes, *assesses* the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and *provides* evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results for **student learning outcomes** for **each** of its **educational programs**.

Essential Components for Compliance:

- identifies outcomes
- assesses outcomes
- provides evidence of seeking improvement
- based on analysis of the results
- student learning outcomes
- each educational program

Excellence in Assessment: Standard 8.2.a

As noted above, Standard 8.2.a requires institutions to provide "evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of results." The evidence for this standard can be seen in the practices across our educational programs at Georgia Southern University, across different levels of instruction.

One undergraduate program selected this past year as demonstrating excellence in assessment is the Bachelor of Arts in English. The program was recognized as "a clear example of seeking improvement based on an analysis of results." Based on data from the 2018-19 assessment cycle, the English program developed an action plan to increase student familiarity with discipline-specific terminology, analytic strategies, and schools of literary theory. The plan included several initiatives targeted at different levels of instruction. For example, the program developed a booklet, "The Fundamentals of Literary Study," that was implemented at both the 3000- and 4000-level. When data was collected and analyzed for the 2019-2020 assessment report, the

department found similar levels of improvement across both the Armstrong and Statesboro campuses. Based on these positive results, English plans to continue with the implementation of their action plan to determine if such improvement is maintained across several assessment cycles.

At the graduate level, the M.A. in Spanish also strongly demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement in student learning. Their action plan covered two years and incorporated several additional student supports, e.g., example documents and rubrics introduced early in the program help students prepare for oral and written examinations aligned with multiple program student learning outcomes. After reviewing results over a 2 year cycle, the program revisited their action plan to identify what strategies proved most effective and identify new strategies in those areas needing further reinforcement. In addition to establishing a successful assessment cycle that demonstrates "seeking improvement based on analysis of results," both the M.A. in Spanish and the B.A. in English are noteworthy for their "genuine collaboration and shared responsibility among program faculty and department leadership, with a common goal of improving student learning."

Upcoming Events

COMPLIANCE CERTIFICATION TEAM MEETING
Armstrong Center Ballroom
August 30th, 2022
9:30 AM - 12:00 PM

2022 SACSCOC ANNUAL MEETING
December 3rd - 6th, 2022
Atlanta, GA

And our July newsletter winner is...

Victoria Brannen!
(Facilities - Planning, Design, & Construction)
Email assessment@georgiasouthern.edu within 30 days to claim your prize.

We're Listening!

In our April newsletter survey, our readers asked about assessment resources such as rubrics/resources for assessment and an "open house" for assessment and accreditation. We're excited to announce IAA will host an Expo on Learning Improvement & Assessment in August. This day-long resource fair and showcase will be offered to support faculty and staff as they prepare for the submission assessment documents, including a special reception to recognize all those who have demonstrated excellence in quality and commitment to student learning and student services outcomes assessment. With open-door activities running throughout the day, faculty and staff can drop in at their convenience and take advantage of the resources and support most applicable to their assessment process. In addition, there will be multiple information sessions about reaffirmation and SACSCOC requirements.

Click the button below if you're interested in attending to help us prepare for the event!

I'm interested

INSTITUTIONAL ASSESSMENT AND ACCREDITATION

LEARNING IMPROVEMENT & ASSESSMENT EXPO 2022

ARMSTRONG   WED. AUGUST 3
10 AM - 5 PM (CHECK IN STARTS AT 9)

STATESBORO   FRI. AUGUST 5
10 AM - 5 PM (CHECK IN STARTS AT 9)

Resource Fair | Exemplar Showcase
Q&A Sessions | Interactive Help Sessions
Photobooth | Raffle Prizes
Assessment All-Stars Reception

SACSCOC Accreditation Resources

As we work together to prepare for our Compliance Certification and on-site review, keep in mind the resources provided by SACSCOC:

[The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#)
In addition to providing all the standards and sub-standards for accreditation, this document provides an overview of the philosophy, purpose, and process of accreditation.

[Resource Manual for The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement](#) *This document provides additional guidance regarding requirements and recommendations for each standard and includes a list of guiding questions and possible evidence that could be used to support compliance in the Compliance Certification narrative.*

PROMOTING MEANINGFUL AND MANAGEABLE ASSESSMENT

Institutional Assessment and Accreditation (IAA) works collaboratively with faculty, staff, and administration to ensure the quality of the programs and educational experiences offered by the university, addressing the unique assessment needs of courses, departments, colleges, or units through individual and group consultations, professional development workshops, recommendations for technology implementation, and best practice reference materials.

IAA website

Assessment Services Request

Enter to win a prize by answering a few quick questions.