

- CR 8.1 *(Student achievement)*
Standard 8.2.a *(Student outcomes: educational programs)*
Standard 8.2.b *(Student outcomes: general education)*
Standard 8.2.c *(Student outcomes: academic and student services)*

7.3 **The institution identifies expected outcomes of its administrative support services and demonstrates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved.**
(Administrative effectiveness)

Rationale and Notes

It is critical that administrative support services are provided effectively in order for the institution to obtain its strategic goals as well as operational efficiency. Administrative support service units normally include offices and departments such as finance and procurement, facilities and physical plant, administrative services, development/advancement, research office, the president’s office, etc. These offices serve the educational mission of the institution in a much more indirect way than do offices related to educational programs or academic and student services, but they are just as critical for the ability of the institution to achieve its mission. The efficient operation of these units is critical whether these functions are provided internally or outsourced to a contractor.

While these units rarely have “expected learning outcomes,” “expected outcomes” for administrative units typically include outcomes such as efficiency and quality of service targets (e.g., energy usage, response times, error rates, “clean report” targets, satisfaction rates); monetary targets (e.g., fund-raising targets, research grant targets, auxiliary income targets). Many times, the goals are explicit parts of the budgeting process or components of the strategic plan. For this standard, institutions should interpret “expected outcome” in a manner consistent with that administrative unit’s role in the institution. It is the institution’s responsibility to explain how and why these expected outcomes are determined.

In many cases, administrative outcomes are hard to separate from student support outcomes. Examples would include public safety, which has an administrative function but also generally has a co-curricular student support function, and financial aid, which likewise has a budgetary function as well as a co-curricular educational function. Generally, these “dual function” units would be addressed in Standard 8.2.c (Student outcomes: academic and student services). If those units are instead addressed in this standard, it is incumbent on the institution to explain how this determination follows from its mission and organizational structure; it is strongly suggested that this explanation appear in both standards of the Compliance Certification. While institutions may organize functions differently, it is expected that all administrative services engage in a process to evaluate their effectiveness.

Institutions should determine the organizational levels at which assessment is useful and efficient for administrative units. This tends to vary greatly across institutions due to size and complexity of the institution, and explicit decisions regarding organizational structure. Institutions are not

required or expected to use the same assessment procedures for its administrative structure as those used for units that have specific student learning expectations. Reviewers should be mindful that administrative effectiveness can be achieved in a variety of ways and the mentality that “one size fits all” is inappropriate and diminishes the individual missions of institutions. This is especially true regarding the use of language to describe processes; for example, “assessment,” “evaluation,” “goals,” “outcomes,” and “objectives” may have precise meaning to a reviewer; but, the institution may have a meaningful effectiveness system even if it is not as precise with its language as the reviewer would like.

NOTE ON SAMPLING

There is an expectation that an institution is required to be able to demonstrate administrative effectiveness for all key administrative activities. The volume of material represented by all this activity can be quite large, especially at larger and more complex institutions. To this end, an institution may provide a sampling of the effectiveness of its administrative units at the time of its comprehensive review. Sampling, for the purpose of accreditation, includes the following three elements: (1) a representation that is mindful of the institution’s mission; (2) a valid cross-section of units from across the administrative organizational chart, with every major division represented; and (3) a compelling case as to why the sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution’s administrative services. Sampling does not preclude the institution from having effectiveness data/analysis available on all units. It is the prerogative of a SACSCOC On-Site Committee to conduct a more in-depth review of an institution’s data/findings/analysis on the effectiveness of all its administrative activities than provided via sampling.

Questions to Consider

- Are expected outcomes defined in ways that allow meaningful measurement of actual outcomes?
- Is there evidence of goal-setting and assessment activities for each unit?
- Can you meaningfully determine whether expectations were met?
- How does administrative assessment relate to the goals found within the comprehensive planning and assessment processes of the institution?
- Does your organizational structure hinder or advance administrative effectiveness?
- For units with combined administrative and student support functions, how do you deal with both elements?
- Are your expected outcomes of administrative units consistent with the data underlying your institutional budget?
- If the institution used sampling, why were the sampling and findings an appropriate representation of the institution’s administrative units?

Sample Documentation

- Organizational charts and an explanation of how the institution's administrative support service units undertake effectiveness reviews.
- Expected outcomes for administrative support services.
- Findings from the evaluation of those outcomes.
- Generally unit-level reports are provided instead of overarching summaries.
- Explanation of how unit assessments relate to comprehensive planning and evaluation.
- If sampling is used, (1) how the sampling is representative of the institution's mission, (2) documentation of a valid cross-section of units, and (3) make a case as to why sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's units.

Reference to SACSCOC Documents, If Applicable

None noted.

Cross-References to Other Related Standards/Requirements, If Applicable

CR 7.1 (*Institutional planning*)

Standard 13.2 (*Financial documents*)