

Characteristics of Good Evidence

Statements in the self-evaluation report, both in the description and evaluation sections, need to be backed up by evidence. It is the data upon which a judgment or conclusion is based. It answers questions that have been deliberately posed because we regard them as important. Evidence tells all stakeholders that an institution has investigated its questions and knows something about itself—it knows what it has achieved. For specific examples of evidence suggested for your standard (e.g., Instructional Programs, Student Support Services, Financial Resources), see section 7.2 of the *Guide to Institutional Self-Evaluation, Improvement, and Peer Review* (https://accjc.org/wp-content/uploads/Guide-to-Institutional-Self-Evaluation-Improvement-Peer-Review_Jan2020.pdf). Please note: All evidence must be made into PDFs, as no web links are allowed in the ISER. If a website is used as evidence, screenshots can be taken and merged into a single PDF.

For evidence to be useful, it must have undergone analysis and reflection by the college community. The dialogue required for analysis and reflection is an integral part of the capacity an institution has for using evidence to make improvements. Good evidence needs to be reliable. It is representative, not just an isolated case, and it is information upon which an institution can take action to improve. It is relevant, verifiable, representative, and actionable.

Evidence about student achievements (student movement through the institution) should include disaggregated data on:

- Student preparedness for college, including performance on placement tests and/or actual placement
- Student training, needs, including local employment training needs, transfer education needs, basic skills needs, etc.
- Course completion, retention from term to term, progression to the next course, program (major) completion, graduation and transfer rates, job placement, scores on licensure exams

Evidence should also be about student learning outcomes (mastery of the knowledge, skills, abilities, competencies attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and values at the course, program, and degree levels in the context of the college mission and population). It should include data on:

- Development, dissemination, and assessment of SLO attainment
- Samples of student work/performance (recitals, projects, capstone courses, etc.)
- Summary of assessment data
- Measurement and analysis of student attainment of SLOs used as part of the institution's self evaluation and planning processes
- Improvement of the teaching/learning process as a result of the analysis

The self-evaluation should be only one phase of ongoing institutional evaluation. *A visiting evaluation team should be able to see how the institution develops and uses evidence of effectiveness as part of its ongoing evaluative processes.* Institutions should gather and use both qualitative and quantitative evidence, and often must use indirect as well as direct measures to assess institutional effectiveness. Good evidence has the following characteristics:

- It is intentional, and dialogue about its meaning and relevance has taken place.
- It is purposeful, designed to answer questions the institution has raised.
- It has been interpreted and reflected upon, not just offered up in its raw or unanalyzed form.
- It is integrated and presented in the context of other information about the institution that creates a holistic view.

- It is cumulative and is corroborated by multiple sources of data.
- It is coherent and sound enough to provide guidance for improvement.

The purpose of good evidence is to encourage informed institutional dialogue that engages the college community and *leads to improvement of its processes, procedures, policies, relationships, ultimately with the effect of improving student learning*. Good evidence should provide the means for institutions or evaluators to make judgments about quality and future direction.

Institutions report or store good evidence in many formats, and institutions engaged in self-evaluative teams may find good evidence in a number of sources, including:

- institutional data bases
- documents such as handbooks, hiring manuals, shared governance manuals
- catalogues and class schedule
- policy statements, Board Rules, motions
- collective bargaining agreements
- program review documents, actions taken on the basis of program review, connection of program review to budget and resource allocation, connection to institutional effectiveness and student success
- planning documents, evaluation and revision of plans
- minutes of meetings
- syllabi, course outlines
- institutional fact books and special institutional research reports
- survey results
- assessments of student work on examinations, class assignments, capstone projects, etc.
- outcomes reports
- town halls, discussions
- workshop and training evaluations
- faculty grading rubrics and analyses of student learning outcomes
- financial audits

Remember: If there is no evidence, it didn't happen! As we go about our normal work, think about the evidence we will need. Be sure someone is taking notes and accurate minutes. Be sure that websites are updated and minutes/agendas are posted. Be the accreditation watchdogs to be sure we have evidence of our actions.