



HOW WIDS SUPPORTS ACICS ACCREDITATION

The Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and School (ACICS) is the accrediting body for “private postsecondary institutions offering certificates or diplomas, and postsecondary institutions offering associate, bachelor’s, or master’s degrees in programs designed to educate students for professional, technical, or occupational careers, including those that offer those programs via distance education.”

The *Accreditation Policies, Procedures, and Standards*, effective August 1, 2011, call for increased emphasis on learning-centered principles and assessment of learning outcomes. Below we explore how WIDS can help meet a number of the Evaluation Standards.

What is WIDS?

WIDS is a web-based curriculum management system. It is used to design, manage, and disseminate curriculum across an organization and geographical boundaries, so integrity of curriculum is maintained. A built-in workflow process allows for review of projects (such as programs and courses), curriculum approval, and archiving. Active “official” curriculum remains undisturbed during the revision and approval phase. It helps colleges document 1) how organization, program, and course level outcomes are connected, 2) how curriculum meets external standards, and 3) how curriculum is implemented at the course level. WIDS also helps colleges meet both institutional and programmatic accreditation requirements.

What ACICS Requires

The mission of ACICS is to “advance educational excellence” with a “deliberate and thorough accreditation process of quality assurance” (p. 2). Foundations in quality revolve around targeting the right outcomes, assessing whether outcomes have been met, and adjusting the next steps for improvement. Curriculum design is no different. A consistent framework such as WIDS helps infuse quality principles and continuous improvement practices:

- Learning outcomes must be identified as the right outcomes (are we teaching the right skills?)
- Assessment must be valid (do our assessments target intended outcomes?)
- Performance results must be analyzed (did all program graduates meet the minimum standard?)
- Interventions must be made in order to improve performance the next time around

These principles are similar to the Plan, Do, Check, Act cycle of assessment. Accreditation standards today are similar in that they promote a process of continuous improvement and a system to increase the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Tools that support the entire cycle of Plan, Do, Check, Act (like WIDS) can play a key role in effective deployment and documentation of learning outcomes.

ACICS Evaluation Standards

General Standards Applicable to All Institutions

3.1.100

Mission: Purpose and Objectives

Every institution must have a mission which is its specific purpose for existing (p. 35).

Terry O’Banion, a recognized leader in the field of higher education, has laid out the following principles for colleges that embrace learning-centered

missions. WIDS helps colleges develop curriculum and moves them toward achievement of these principles.

Learning College Principles

WIDS

Create substantive change in individual learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a consistent design process that focuses on learning results. • Ensures that all components of the curriculum are consistently connected to the intended learning outcomes.
Engage learners in the learning process as full partners who must assume primary responsibility for their own choices and learning experiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps instructors develop performance-based syllabi supported by learning plans that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ encourage metacognition ✓ engage learners actively in the learning process
Create as many options for learning as possible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the design of curriculum for all disciplines and delivery modes. • Advocates for learning strategies that honor varied ways of acquiring and processing information. • Generates learner-friendly documents in PDF, Word or HTML. • Complements platforms like Blackboard and Moodle.
Assist learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages the design of learning activities that actively engage learners in a variety of interpersonal and intrapersonal environments. • Ensures that learning activities are targeted to pre-determined learning outcomes.
Define the roles of learning facilitators in response to the needs of the learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides instructors to design learning activities (what the learners will do) prior to designing teaching activities (how the instructor facilitates the learning).
Document results.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds results-driven curriculum with a pre-determined outcomes structure that spells out performance expectations at the organizational, program, and course levels. • Provides a framework for showing how curricular outcomes address external standards. • Guides educators to first plan learning outcomes in terms of what learners will be able to do as a result of a given learning experience • Includes tools for developing scoring guides that help to make assessment valid, reliable, and fair.

O'Banion, Terry (1997), *A Learning college for the 21st Century*, American Council on Education Series, Oryx Press.

**3.1.111
Campus and
Institutional
Effectiveness Plans**

In the spirit of continuous improvement, ACICS requires as part of a Campus Effectiveness Plan, five elements at a minimum. When designing programs in WIDS, users can list these same elements (and more). Although the data results are not aggregated in WIDS, WIDS sets the stage for evaluation of student learning outcomes across the college and across programs.

Program Project Management	Program Outcome Summary	Program Courses	Performance Assessment Tasks	Program Assessment Plans																								
Program Information Dental Assistant 31-508-1 - Indirect Measures																												
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program Information Mission Target Population Career/Job Titles Accreditation Information External Requirements Entry Requirements Indirect Measures Custom Fields Related Outcomes Program Outcomes Quick Prints 	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>#</th> <th>Indirect Measures</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Meets target measure for percentage of all students in the program who complete at least 80% of the courses they took in the previous year.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Percentage of special population students in the program who complete at least 80% of the courses they took in the previous year is equal to all student course completion.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Percentage of minority students in the program who complete at least 80% of the courses they took in the previous year is equal to all student course completion.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Meets target measure for two-year and three-year retention.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>Meets target measure for percent of first-time students graduating in three years.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6</td> <td>Meets target measure for percent of first-time students graduating in five years.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>Meets target measure for job placement in training related and other employment.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8</td> <td>Meets target measure for nontraditional gender enrollment.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9</td> <td>Meets college expectation for employer satisfaction</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10</td> <td>Meets college expectation for graduate satisfaction</td> </tr> <tr> <td>11</td> <td>Exit interviews are performed with students who withdraw from the program prior to completion, and results are used to inform continuing improvement</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				#	Indirect Measures	1	Meets target measure for percentage of all students in the program who complete at least 80% of the courses they took in the previous year.	2	Percentage of special population students in the program who complete at least 80% of the courses they took in the previous year is equal to all student course completion.	3	Percentage of minority students in the program who complete at least 80% of the courses they took in the previous year is equal to all student course completion.	4	Meets target measure for two-year and three-year retention.	5	Meets target measure for percent of first-time students graduating in three years.	6	Meets target measure for percent of first-time students graduating in five years.	7	Meets target measure for job placement in training related and other employment.	8	Meets target measure for nontraditional gender enrollment.	9	Meets college expectation for employer satisfaction	10	Meets college expectation for graduate satisfaction	11	Exit interviews are performed with students who withdraw from the program prior to completion, and results are used to inform continuing improvement
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Indirect Measures data input screen.

The first step in outcome assessment planning is to develop a standardized instrument for scoring. A standard program assessment rubric, for example (created in WIDS—see below) can be used to gather baseline data and end-of-program data. A standard general education rubric (also created in WIDS) can be used to assess gen ed outcomes across the college.

Scoring Standard
You must achieve an overall average rating of at least 2 for each program outcome to demonstrate competence (passing). A rating of 0 on any criterion results in a 0 score for that program outcome.

Rating Scale

4 Advanced: Performs at the leadership level; meets or exceeds "proficient" standard
 3 Proficient: Performs effectively, efficiently, and independently
 2 Competent: Performs adequately, meets basic standards
 1 Developing: Shows emerging skill; evidence is incomplete or performance requires improvement
 0 Not Observed: Little or no evidence of competence

Scoring Guide		Criteria	Ratings
Carry out dental office procedures			
1.	you employ telephone management techniques		0 1 2 3 4
2.	you manage appointments		0 1 2 3 4
3.	you manage recall systems		0 1 2 3 4
4.	you process accounts receivable		0 1 2 3 4
5.	you manage business equipment and software programs		0 1 2 3 4
Manage infection and hazard control			
1.	you employ personal and patient protection to prevent disease transmission		0 1 2 3 4
2.	you reprocess instruments and treatment room		0 1 2 3 4
3.	you adhere to OSHA Hazardous Communication standard		0 1 2 3 4

Program Assessment Rubric designed in WIDS (abridged)

Scoring Standard
You must achieve a "2" or "3" on all criteria.

Rating Scale

1 Does not demonstrate criterion.
 2 Demonstrated at an acceptable level.
 3 Demonstrated at an exemplary level.

Scoring Guide		Criteria	Ratings
Communicate effectively			
1.	you read, retain, restate, and apply ideas for a variety of purposes		1 2 3
2.	you write clearly, concisely, and accurately in a variety of contexts and formats		1 2 3
3.	you speak clearly, concisely, and accurately in a variety of contexts and formats		1 2 3
4.	you demonstrate active listening skills		1 2 3
Think critically			
1.	you demonstrate observation skills		1 2 3
2.	you identify a problem to be solved, task to be performed, or decision to be made		1 2 3
3.	you gather appropriate information from multiple sources		1 2 3
4.	you evaluate information		1 2 3
5.	you formulate alternative solutions, processes, or decisions and identifies potential consequences		1 2 3
6.	you select an appropriate solution, process, or decision (abridged)		1 2 3

General Education Assessment Rubric designed in WIDS (abridged)

After these rubrics are administered, data is reported using the Outcome Assessment Planning feature. This feature closes the loop in assessment planning as results are reported across programs (or across the organization) and interventions can be recorded.

Institutional Effectiveness Plans require a systemic process for curriculum review. WIDS already includes a built in workflow process for development, review, and approval of programs and courses (including syllabi). A centralized tool improves communication across campuses and provides a common platform for access of items in review.

3.1.500 Educational Activities

Definable “instruction, interaction, and evaluation” are noted by ACICS as an index of an institution’s quality. One way in which this is documented is through clearly defined

learning outcomes, learning activities [interactions], and assessment activities. In each WIDS Learning Plan, a target outcome is identified, and associated learning activities and assessment activities are listed. In fact, activities can be coded to a four-phase learning cycle and classified by learning style.

For programs in which certification or licensing is mandatory, WIDS allows for mapping of external standards to programs and courses. This fulfills the ACICS requirement that “curriculums must contain the necessary course work to afford students the opportunity to obtain the minimum skills and competencies in order to be certified” (p. 44).

It is common for external programmatic accrediting agencies to publish lists of skills required for accreditation. Although it may be easy to claim that a specific curriculum meets such external standards, the documentation to prove exactly where courses infuse external standards is often missing.

The WIDS tool is a database; therefore mapping of external standards across a program is done with actual data elements (standards to program outcomes for example, or standards to courses). WIDS comes pre-populated with external standards, and the library can be easily updated by clients. Our consultants have extensive experience in aligning curriculum to standards, as described more fully in our Credentials. See below for a matrix example.

Radiography Technician

External Standards Course Assignment Matrix

External Standards	RAD100: Intro to Radiography	RAD150: Radiography Positioning I	RAD160: Radiography Positioning 2
ASRT 2007			
A. I. Computed Tomography Generations	Introduced		
A. II. Components, Operations and Processes			
A. III. Radiation Protection	Assessed		
B. I. Clinical Practice			
B. II. Procedural Performance		Introduced	Practiced
B. III. Clinical Competency			
C. I. Basic Principles of Digital Radiography	Introduced		
C. II. Image Acquisition			
C. III. Image Acquisition Errors			
C. IV. Software (Default) Image Processing			

Outcomes Matrix Report designed in WIDS. Qualifiers can be customized and/or abbreviated.

**3.1.512
Program Planning**

No matter the mode of delivery, the “design of educational programs should involve students, graduates, administrators, faculty, and other interested parties such as advisory committees” (p. 45).

Such committees are not new and provide insight into program planning and development. Often used to validate curriculum and relevance, these groups of practitioners provide valuable input into planning. Because WIDS is role-based and users interact with data only as permitted, a “reviewer” role, for example, can be assigned to advisory committee members. Those members may log into WIDS to review

pending projects (programs and courses) and their comments are archived within the project. This provides evidence that programs were evaluated; user names and dates are recorded.

3.1.513
Program
Development

According to ACICS, “the curricula shall be published ... and shall state objectives specific to each curriculum. There shall be a detailed syllabus on file for each course in each curriculum” (p. 45).

Program Outcome Summary Reports, Program Configurations, and Syllabi designed in WIDS contain required catalog information as specified by ACICS (p. 99). Open fields exist for customizing program and syllabus reports. A Guideline Library ensures that required policies are consistently inserted into syllabi across the organization. Policies can be customized and “read only” to instructors during syllabus development. Syllabi designed in WIDS meet description requirements listed in the ACICS Glossary (p. 81). Visit www.wids.org to see *Sample Reports* for program and course documents designed in WIDS.

3.1.514
Program Evaluation

“The faculty shall participate in a systematic process of continuous curriculum evaluation and revision” (p. 46).

A centralized tool for design, review, and deployment of curriculum creates efficiencies, as headaches related to version control are eliminated; only those with permission to view/comment on revisions are able to do so. Most importantly, WIDS closes the loop in assessment planning, as minimum standards for student success are documented and data collection plans are laid out. Program improvement objectives and improvement interventions are recorded.

The built-in workflow process is role-based, so instructors or managers can log-in, get what they need, comment, and log out. Once curriculum is finalized, projects move out of a work-in-progress phase and become active—accessible to all within the organization. WIDS becomes the “go-to” source for curriculum, whether a program is undergoing review or a finalized course is ready for launch. No need to create a new process for curriculum evaluation and revision; WIDS is the process.