Winthrop University's
Manual: Assessment Plans and Improvement Reports (APIR)

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Purpose

Winthrop uses assessment findings to inform programmatic decisions in administrative, student life, and academic program units, document student achievements, and improve the quality of learning for all Winthrop students. Winthrop's Manual for Assessment Plans and Improvement Reports (APIR) is updated biennially to facilitate ongoing documentation of assessment plans, results and evidence-based decisions, and support Winthrop's accountability obligations to federal and state agencies and accreditation organizations. The APIR manual information can guide campus professionals as they provide evidence that unit personnel articulate program outcomes[1] (goals), align outcomes to institutional, unit and program missions, assess achievement of outcomes, and use results to make decisions and take actions to improve learning. The APIR manual provides academic and student support personnel with resources for articulating student learning outcomes (SLOs), assessing SLOs achievement, and providing evidence that SLO assessment results informed actions taken to improve learning. Winthrop's [Budget and Institutional Effectiveness Annual Cycle](#) illustrates relationships among assessment and evidence-based planning and resource allocation.

Background and APIR 2015 updates

Winthrop's APIR Manual, established in 2009 and formerly called the Institutional Assessment Plan and Guide (IAP&G), provides context, guidance, and resource suggestions to demonstrate how Winthrop's administrative operations, academic programs and student support services facilitate achievement of the University [mission](#), [goals, strategic priorities, and objectives](#).[2]

2015 APIR Manual updates were informed by feedback from internal users, changes to regulatory obligations from federal and state agencies and regional accreditation agencies, and results from Winthrop's 2013-14 re-visioning process that led to articulation of the University's current goals, strategic priorities, and objectives. Winthrop's comprehensive 2013-14 campus-wide visioning process included [focus groups](#) and [town hall](#) meetings with internal and external stakeholder groups.   Feedback indicated a need for expanded documentation regarding assessment and evidence-based improvements for administrative and student support units. In

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[1] Winthrop uses terminology and operational definition articulated by SACSCOC

[2] Readers can access Winthrop's Goals, Strategic Priorities, and Objectives via [the South Carolina (SC) Statehouse reports site](#), the [SC State Agency Accountability Reports web site for Fiscal year 2013-14](#), or [Winthrop's web site](#).

prior editions of the APIR, one chapter was a primer enumerating basic steps for conducting assessment and documenting evidence-based improvements. The chapter on assessment basics was dropped from the current edition of the APIR but interested readers may view the chapter in archived copies of prior editions. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) updates encompass regulations and standards introduced, clarified, or refined since Winthrop's 2011 SACSCOC decennial reaffirmation. Portions of the original manual published in 2009 were adapted with permission from the University of Virginia's Assessment Guide.   Winthrop's Department of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services (AAAS) is responsible for producing, updating and disseminating the APIR, which is publicly available on the AAAS assessment resources web site.

External Mandates – Federal and State
Winthrop students are eligible for Title IV federal financial aid, obligating Winthrop to meet federal and regional (SACSCOC) reporting requirements. The Commission on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) monitors and oversees the work of regional accreditation organizations in the United States, including SACSCOC. South Carolina regulatory updates include Accountability Reporting format and templates introduced in FY 2013-14, updates in the SC Executive Budget Office (EBO) associated with budget planning, and the SC Commission on Higher Education (CHE). As a public institution in South Carolina, Winthrop meets state reporting and transparency obligations as evidenced by annual state accountability reports, Commission on Higher Education Management Information Systems (CHEMIS) data and publications, enrollment and completion reports, and student achievement goals. The SC Executive Budget Office (EBO) provides links to a variety of documents including budget planning instructions, detail base budget from prior years, federal and other funds retained and expended by state agencies 2011-12 through 2013-14, and budget plans. The SC Budget and Control Board Transparency Hub offers a portal function enabling readers to access financial information associated with budgets. Readers are reminded that URLs are ephemeral and organizations periodically update their web sites; broken links may require further searches.

AAAS monitors and manages data security associated with data requests to ensure compliance with FERPA and the SC Family and Personal Identifying Information Privacy Act.   AAAS provides data support for administrative decision-making associated with Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), institutional planning and resource allocation, and external reporting obligations. AAAS personnel provide campus units with training support to access data and use software e.g., the *Primary Instructor Credentialing System* (PICS), Activity Insight, and Winthrop's *Online Assessment Plans and Improvement Reporting System (*OARS). AAAS also provides internal stakeholders with data support and consultancy services to facilitate understanding of government and accreditation assessment and reporting obligations and in collecting and archiving evidence demonstrating compliance with reporting obligations and standards.

External Mandates – SACSCOC - Administrative, Academic, and Student Support

SACSCOC describes its decennial reaffirmation and Fifth-Year Interim reviews as institutional audit processes. Timelines and general information are on Winthrop's SACSCOC web site and the SACSCOC web site. The timeline for reaffirmation and Fifth-Year Reports for Track B institutions (Winthrop is a Track B institution) is also posted on the SACSCOC timeline web site. Standards comprehensively address all aspects of administrative, academic and student support services and operations including (but not limited to) responsibilities and qualifications of institutional personnel, regulatory compliance, resource management, programming, support services, physical facilities, communication systems, technological applications and partnerships with external groups. Appendix A provides an overview of information related to SACSCOC standards. Appendix A is also found in the current SACSCOC Resource Manual.

Evidence-based compliance narratives are required for decennial reaffirmation and the Fifth-Year Interim Report. All SACSCOC standards (Core Requirements (CR), Comprehensive Standards (CS), and Federal Requirements (FR)) must be addressed in the decennial compliance review (See Appendix A). Selected SACSCOC standards are required for Parts II and III of the Fifth-Year Interim Report. All administrative, student support and academic units are responsible for knowing and staying current with SACSCOC standards and for integrating (into compliance narratives) cross-referenced SACSCOC standards, Policies, Guidelines, and Position Statements documented in the Resource Manual, to ensure assessment results and evidence-based improvements demonstrate compliance with reporting obligations. According to Winthrop's SACSCOC Vice President Contact, Dr. Crystal Baird, the top five standards cited for noncompliance in the past five years (encompassing > 409 institutional reviews) include the following.

1. CS 3.3.1.1: institutional effectiveness (IE) academic programs (49% of institutions)

2. CR 2.8 : # of qualified full time faculty for each academic program (39% of institutions)

3. CS 3.4.11 qualified academic coordinators (31% of institutions)

4. FR 4.5 student complaints (23% of institutions)

5. CS 3.10.2 / FR 4.7 Financial Aid/Title IV (21% of institutions)

More recently (April 2015), SACSCOC posted a report of the Top 10 Most Frequently Cited *Principles* in Reaffirmation Reviews: 2013 Reaffirmation Class. *Citation* in this context means institutions were asked to provide additional documentation demonstrating compliance with the standard in question. The decennial reaffirmation process includes several opportunities for institutions to make a case for compliance with SACSCOC standards. Off-site SACSCOC peer

reviewers who evaluate the initial Compliance Narrative identify standards for which additional information is needed in order to make a judgment about compliance. Typically, the response to the Off-Site team's request for additional information is a Focused Report (p. 12) conveyed to SACSCOC at the same time the institution conveys its proposed Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), several weeks prior to the scheduled on-site visit. The SACSCOC on-site team reviews evidence in the Focused Report addressing queries posed by the off-site team and makes one of two decisions, either the additional information conveyed in the Focused Report provides the clarity needed or the on-site team addresses the matter during the on-site visit. Following the on-site visit, the on-site team prepares a report of their findings, again identifying what, if any, standards still require additional information before a determination of compliance can be made. Institutions then have one more opportunity to provide additional information before the SACSCOC Board of Trustees (BOT) votes on the institution's status. If the information provided by the institution following the on-site visit does not provide sufficient evidence for the BOT, the matter is conveyed to the SACSCOC Committees on *Compliance and Reports* (*C&R*). Several SACSCOC documents (*Interview Policy*[3]*; Fifth-year Interim Report Outline*[4]*, and Reports Requested for COC Review*[5]) provide more details on roles and responsibilities of the C & R Committees.

Unit assessment coordinators in student life, administrative and academic units are encouraged to review SACSCOC documents at least twice a year to ensure familiarity with current standards, policies, guidelines, position statements, and other reporting expectations. While SACSCOC can make updates throughout the year, generally spring (following BOT actions during the December annual meeting) and August-September (following BOT actions during its June meeting) are good times to perform a web scan of SACSCOC URLs for updates to policies, procedures, guidelines or resource materials. At a minimum, readers are encouraged to examine the following sites for updates: WebChanges, Institutional Resources, Policies and Publications, Index of Documents, and SACSCOC review team resources.

Distance and correspondence education is an area for which SACSCOC reporting obligations have become more complex since Winthrop's 2011 decennial reaffirmation. Unit assessment coordinators and senior administrators should review standards and evidence sources to ensure current and cross-referenced standards, policies, position statements, and guidelines

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[3] http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/interview%20policy%20fin.pdf

[4] http://www.sacscoc.org/fifth%20year/Summary.The%20Fifth%20Year%20Interim%20Report.pdf

[5] http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Reports%20requested%20for%20COC%20review.pdf

are documented for Winthrop's Fifth-Year Interim Report. Unit assessment teams and coordinators are reminded to verify that relevant SACSCOC policies and cross-referenced standards have been addressed in preparing compliance narratives. SACSCOC Institutional Resources includes links to the *Resource Manual,* templates (some of which are undergoing revisions), policies, guidelines and timelines.

Unit assessment coordinators/teams should confer with their respective academic deans, vice presidents, or other senior administrators to determine unit level assessment team or committee structures and to discuss unit-level loci of responsibility associated with monitoring SACSCOC web sites, documentation, review, and monitoring of assessment plans and evidence-based improvement reports, and providing feedback to program personnel. Evidence of unit-level assessment coordination and feedback to program personnel can include minutes from assessment meetings, names of attendees, copies of rubrics (evaluation tools) used to review unit level assessment plans and improvement reports, and copies of completed unit-level reviews linked to rubrics or other evaluation tool(s), and actions taken. Simply offering copies of rubrics without providing evidence they were actually used does not demonstrate compliance with SACSCOC standards.

Documenting and evaluating a case for compliance

Institutions are required to use centralized reporting and to document evidence-based decisions and improvements, i.e. provide evidence that assessment results **were** used to inform decisions and actions to improve learning and achieve goals (outcomes). Merely reporting changes to assessment strategies/instruments does not constitute compliance with standards associated with institutional effectiveness. *Plans to use assessment results in the future* do not constitute evidence of compliance with SACSCOC CS 3.3.1 (Resource Manual, pp 48-53).

Winthrop's Online Assessment Plan and Improvement Reporting template (OARS) is the centralized reporting template all administrative, student life and academic units use to annually document plans to assess program goal achievement, report assessment results from past/current reporting periods, and document evidence-based improvements informed by assessment findings. The OARS reporting template was internally designed and implemented in 2009 to meet SACSCOC centralized reporting obligations while accommodating Winthrop's tradition of decentralized authority and responsibility for assessment and using assessment results to make decisions and take actions that improve programs and learning. The OARS reporting template includes a combination of constructed-response boxes and closed-ended cells that provide administrative, academic, and student support units with flexibility to meet SACSCOC reporting and evidence obligations while accommodating unique division/unit reporting obligations to other external stakeholders. The online reporting template enables unit

personnel to show how their expected outcomes are aligned to Winthrop's goals, strategic priorities, objectives, and KPIs as well as SACSCOC standards.

Winthrop's centralized template and approach met SACSCOC reporting obligations during Winthrop's 2011 decennial reaffirmation. The OARS is not a repository for all data files related to assessment and evidence-based improvements. Small files and simple graphics may be uploaded to the OARS. Large files and complex graphics used as evidence of compliance with SACSCOC standards should be archived in the unit's assessment and evidence repository and referenced in OARS along with information on who to contact to obtain more information about the archived documents. Unit assessment coordinators should also use OARS to document procedures for external review teams to obtain access to unit level evidence. To schedule OARS training, contact AAAS by going to the online data request form and using the *request description* box.

Reporting Assessment Results and Evidence-based actions taken, decisions made
While data from and about individuals are collected for assessment initiatives, the focus of analysis and reports is always at the level of the program or a group. Results associated with individuals are confidential; de-identified data are used in summary reports. Most programs are in varying stages of assessment and evidence-based improvements in any one academic or fiscal year. OARS 2.0 accommodates such variability with constructed response opportunities enabling personnel to provide narrative they deem necessary. All programs/units are expected to post assessment plans for the current year (fiscal or academic) by October. Designated campus professionals who are responsible for uploading assessment plans, results and improvement reports (actions, decisions) into OARS have log-in access 24-7.   Periodically, OARS may be unavailable to campus professionals to accommodate technology adjustments. Campus personnel will be notified by email if OARS is temporarily taken off-line. Use the AAAS data request form to report problems using the OARS.

Primary Instructor Credentialing System (PICS)
In addition to OARS, Winthrop provides senior academic administrators with access to PICS, Winthrop's official repository of academic credentials and experiential evidence documenting qualifications of instructional faculties to teach assigned courses. Documentation within PICS provides proof to government and accreditation organizations that each primary instructor of record meets or exceeds standards set forth in credentialing guidelines. PICS is also the official repository for all syllabi by instructor of record, academic terms, and course sections. Given the June 2014 SACSCOC Guidelines update to CR 2.8 (*The **number of full-time faculty members is adequate** to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and the integrity of **each of its academic programs***), PICS serves as the source of evidence verifying adequate

number of qualified full-time faculty members for degree programs. For their units, academic deans ensure implementation of the following actions in PICS.

- Update and upload transcripts, certificates, syllabi, vitae, and other supporting documentation to the system;
- Correct information that is out of date or inaccurate, or contact AAAS for help;
- Provide experiential justification for faculty members who do not have either a terminal degree in the teaching field or a master's degree with proof of at least 18 graduate credit hours in the teaching field. SACSCOC does not recognize academic vitae as evidence of experiential qualifications without corroborating evidence.

Winthrop also subscribes to **Activity Insight**, a Digital Measures application to facilitate use of electronic annual reports produced by program faculties. Activity Insight provides reporting capacities for faculty members to manage and document their contributions related to teaching, scholarship and service. Activity Insight may supplement but not replace PICS.

Loci of Responsibility for SACSCOC standards

Familiarity and documentation of compliance with current SACSCOC standards is the shared responsibility of all institutional units. Documentation of compliance with SACSCOC standards is typically led by unit assessment teams and coordinators who report to their respective senior administrators on the Executive Leadership Council (ELC) or the Academic Leadership Council (ALC). Unit assessment teams monitor and are familiar with current standards and ensure cross-referenced standards are taken into account when collecting, archiving and documenting evidence of compliance with SACSCOC standards.

To illustrate, responsibility for adequacy of physical facilities is shared across academic, administrative, and student support units, integrated into multiple SACSCOC standards, and linked to Winthrop's institutional goal (#2) *Continually enhance the quality of the Winthrop Experience for all students, Strategic Priority 2.3 Provide State of the Art Facilities and Infrastructure with appropriate technology to enhance academic and co-curricular learning and career preparation*. Unit assessment personnel provide feedback to senior administrators in academic, student life, and administrative units regarding the adequacy of physical resources and should therefore be familiar with the following SACSCOC standards.

CR 2.11.2 the institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

CS 3.11.1 Control of Physical Resources

CS 3.11.2 Institutional Environment

CS 3.11.3 Operation and maintenance of physical facilities that appropriately serve the needs of the institution's educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities

While Winthrop's Division of Finance and Business houses the University's *Facilities Master Plan* and departments that manage physical facilities, senior administrators in the Divisions of Academic Affairs and Student Life also assess and provide feedback to the offices of Facilities Management and Facilities Design and Development on the quality, safety, and adequacy of Winthrop's physical facilities. Senior administrators communicate needs for maintenance and upgrades to the ELC to inform budget planning and resource allocations (SACSCOC CR 2.5). Academic program reviews (APRs) for both accredited/approved and non-accredited programs include assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of physical facilities to support degree programs (see internal self-study outline). External Review Team (ERT) reports resulting from APRs provide external review of the adequacy of physical facilities and what, if any, physical facilities improvements are needed to improve learning environments.

Another example of shared responsibilities is Information Technology. Campus-wide units have vested interest in hardware and software resources, technology training, data security, data privacy, distance learning, and other technology-related issues associated with student learning and supporting institutional mission achievement. Examples (not an exhaustive list) of SACSCOC standards associated with technology include CR 2.10 and CR 3.3.1.3 (Student Support Services); CS 3.4.12 (Technology Use), and FR 4.8. 1-3 (Distance and Correspondence Education). Each technology standard also requires demonstrating compliance with related SACSCOC Guidelines, Policies and Position Statements. APR includes assessment of technology relative to student learning

How many years of evidence are needed?

Administrative, student life and academic divisions are expected to provide data from 2011 through the present time when preparing narratives for Winthrop's Fifth-Year Interim Report. For organizational units or subdivisions established after Winthrop's December 2011 reaffirmation, senior administrators and unit assessment personnel are expected to provide SACSCOC with narrative explaining how new or organizationally modified units evolved from prior units, including qualitative and quantitative assessment results supporting establishment of new organizational units.

The SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation were adopted in 2004; units should be prepared to demonstrate generally accepted best practices including the items below.

- Sustained over time (at least five continuous years of assessment and evidence-based improvements)

- Pervasive (across administrative, student support service and academic units)

- Multiple methods (direct and indirect, internally- and externally-developed assessment instrumentation)

- Explicit alignments among program and learning outcomes assessment and institutional mission, goals, strategic priorities and objectives.

Avoiding pitfalls

Red flags include episodic initiatives, immature data (< three years), absence of evidence aligning assessment results to decisions across institutional units and divisions, and selective use of examples that do not reflect the campus organizational structure or profile of academic and student support programming.

Expect increased scrutiny on standards that required additional clarification in 2011 or *use of results* that merely discuss future plans. Academic units only using indirect measures to assess SLOs should anticipate requests for evidence demonstrating direct assessment of knowledge and skills. Professional credentialing exams may be a direct measure of student learning in the certificate or degree program. If using an internally-developed comprehensive exam, provide SACSCOC reviewers with documentation showing which exam items are mapped to specific SLOs. Assessment of student artifacts (derived from portfolios, course assignments) that involve rubrics or other rating schema should also map to intended SLOs.

Information Sources

The 2012 *SACSCOC Resource Manual* for the Principles of Accreditation (updated for its second printing, February 2013) is a primary information source to identify cross-referenced standards, policies, guidelines, and position statements. The *Resource Manual* includes questions SACSCOC auditors (external review and on site teams) are encouraged to ask as they review an institution's Compliance or Fifth-Year Interim report and examples of evidentiary documents institutions can use to demonstrate compliance with each standard. Unit assessment coordinators and teams may also want to examine the rubric, *Analyzing a Case for Compliance,* used by SACSCOC review teams when evaluating evidence proffered as demonstrating compliance with SACSCOC standards. While the rubric was originally published in 2010, it still provides insights about how external peer reviewers approach their audit responsibilities.

What's new since 2011?

Readers can link to the SACSCOC *Recent Changes to the Web Site* for quick updates. Institutions are responsible for monitoring and knowing about new standards, updated language to existing standards, and refinements in existing standards.

While examples below are not exhaustive, they provide some detail about the nature of SACSCOC updates since 2011.

- **New Standards (established since Winthrop's 2011 decennial Reaffirmation)**

  - **FR 4.8.1, 4.8.2, 4.8.3** deal with distance and correspondence learning programs and address student identity, privacy, and potential additional fees. FR 4.8.1-3 are cross-referenced with CS 3.13. Also relevant to FR 4.8 is the SACSCOC policy statement on distance and correspondence education, updated in July 2014.

    - All administrative, academic and student support units need to provide evidence demonstrating how their units accommodate needs of students enrolled in distance and correspondence learning.

    - The updated policy statement includes sections on library and learning resources, student services, facilities and finance, in addition to sections on faculty and curricula.

    - Online learning supports Winthrop's goal to promote access and degree attainment. Technology, financial aid, student support services, marketing and public communications, as well as academic coursework and high impact learning practices e.g., internships, global experiences, community/public service, scholarship/research are important dimensions of delivering online learning and improving access to current and prospective students.

  - **FR 4.9** addresses the definition of a credit hour. FR 4.9 was passed during the SACSCOC December 2011 annual meeting; the policy statement was published in January 2012. FR 4.9 is related to CS 3.4.6 (*The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.*). SACSCOC reviewers will examine compliance narratives to find answers to questions including: *1) how the institution ensures the equivalency of credits awarded for alternative format courses, 2) what policies the institution has to determine the level and amount awarded, and 3) how the institution uses standards or professional organizations or practices of peer institutions in developing its credit awarding policies.*

- **Existing Standards updated since Winthrop's 2011 decennial reaffirmation**

  - **CR 2.8** *the number of fulltime faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity **of each of its academic programs.***

    - The language of CR 2.8 was refined following the December 2011 SACSCOC BOT meeting to focus on **disaggregation by academic program and mode of delivery** (e.g., traditional classroom, distance and correspondence learning, and distance sites).

    - See page 24 of the 2012 Resource Manual, *This requirement addresses faculty personnel, not academic support staff. In addition, it includes the number of full-time faculty, disaggregation by academic program and mode of delivery, and location of full-time faculty, not the qualifications of faculty. Finally, it also considers the number of full-time faculty involved in research and service, for institutions that have specified those missions.*

  - CS 3.2.8 (qualified academic and administrative officers) cross-referenced with distance and correspondence education

  - **CS 3.13** (Policy Compliance) was sub-divided into five parts including 3.13.1, 3.13.2, 3.13.3, and 3.13.4a, 3.13.4b, and 3.13.5.

    - The new subsections of CS 3.13 are not articulated in the 2012 Resource Manual. In some cases, readers will find documents describing CS 3.13 as 3.13.a, 3.13.b, and so on; in other cases, the subsections are described as CS 3.13.1-3.13.5. Readers should take note that subsection CS 3.13.4 is further divided into sections "a" and "b".

    - Information about CS 3.13 subsections is available in several places.

      - Go to http://www.SACSCOC.org/FifthYear.asp and scroll to the link, The Fifth-Year Interim Report (Updated). Changes to the Fifth-Year Interim Report were updated in April 2014. Pages 12-13 of the April 2014 update. Winthrop's Fifth-Year Interim Report will include comprehensive documentation associated with

        - CS 3.13.A. accreditation decisions of other agencies

        - CS 3.13.B. Complaint Procedures

        - CS 3.13 C. Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports

- Senior administrators for degree programs having specialized accreditation are advised to review Accrediting Decisions of Other Agencies Policy Statement, and September 2014 slides from Dr. Crystal Baird for documentation obligations associated with subsections of CS 3.13. Convey electronic copies of all accreditation documents from other accrediting agency to AAAS.
  - FR 4.1 new mandate to provide a *Student Achievement Goals* web site
  - FR 4.2 (Program Curriculum) now cross-referenced with Distance and Correspondence education
  - FR 4.7 (Title IV Federal Financial Aid)

SACSCOC Fifth-Year Interim Report

SACSCOC accredited institutions are required to complete a Fifth-Year Interim Report that encompasses a selected group of SACSCOC standards. Narratives and evidence for each standard in Part III of the Fifth-Year Report should be as comprehensive as narratives in the institutions decennial compliance report (Dr. Crystal Baird 2014 presentation about the Fifth-Year Interim Review). The comprehensive narratives are to integrate cross-referenced SACSCOC guidelines, position statements, and other related SACSCOC standards. The Fifth-Year Interim Report was established in response to the US Department of Education's requirement that accrediting organizations continuously monitor institutions to ensure compliance. Authors are reminded of the basics: follow all directions, write clearly and succinctly, explicitly point to supporting documentation, excerpting when appropriate. Avoid a mere data dump by integrating analysis that links results to intended program and learning outcomes, goals, initiatives and strategic priorities. All FRs must be addressed in Winthrop's Fifth-Year Interim Report (See Appendix A).

Winthrop assesses program and learning outcomes in academic programs and student support services and provides evidence that assessment results were used to improve outcomes (CS 3.3.1). In the Division of Academic Affairs, student learning is assessed in general education, undergraduate, graduate, certificate and specialist programs, library services as well as high impact practices (HIPS) such as undergraduate research, TRiO, McNair, Honors and study abroad. In the Division of Student Life, student learning is assessed in programs offered through units such as residence life, health and counseling services, and campus safety. Personnel in Academic Affairs and Student Life collaborate to deliver high impact learning experiences associated with the University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), academic learning communities, career and civic engagement, and cultural events.

Program Level Assessment and Evidence-based Improvements
Academic and student support programs articulate and assess SLOs and document how assessment results inform actions taken to improve learning. Learning outcomes assessed and reported via Student Life will likely be reported for the institution or targeted groups. Academic degree programs are expected to provide evidence that SLOs are assessed at the conclusion of the degree, that assessment results are analyzed by members of the program faculty, not just a single faculty member (e.g., instructor of record) or administrator, and that assessment results are used to improve programs and learning.

Assessment reports that primarily feature student performance at beginning or intermediary levels of the degree program are insufficient to demonstrate compliance with accreditation requirements. Merely gathering or reporting assessment data is insufficient to demonstrate compliance with accreditation requirements. Nor is it sufficient to report programmatic changes without providing evidence that changes are linked to assessment results from specific initiatives or changes in external stakeholders' reporting obligations. OARS and annual reports are data sources for assessment initiatives, results, and evidence-based improvements. In addition to annual assessment and evidence-based improvements, all degree-granting programs are subject to periodic comprehensive academic program reviews (APR) providing another data source documenting assessment initiatives and evidence-based improvements.

Institution Level Assessment and Evidence-based Improvements
Winthrop's multi-year cycle of institutional studies administered through AAAS includes a graduating senior survey and a biennial alumni survey; results from senior and alumni surveys are reported to internal stakeholders and used in rankings reports. Winthrop uses results from a variety of national proprietary surveys to compare its IE with other institutions. The National

Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), currently administered biennially, and other national assessment initiatives such as the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI) and the Tufts University National Study of Learning and Voting Engagement (NSLVE) provide opportunities for external comparisons. In 2013, Winthrop participated in Tufts' NSLVE wherein the National Student Clearing House accesses the Catalist database, matches and de-identifies data, and then sends de-identified data reports to Tufts' CIRCLE for distribution to participating institutions. NSLVE partner organizations include Campus Compact, NASPA, the AASCU's American Democracy Project, and AAC&U's Civic Learning Democratic Engagement. Survey results from proprietary rankings are publicly available and include US News and World Report, Wintergreen Orchard House Survey, Princeton Review college rankings, and Peterson's Guide. (See Table 1)

Table 1 Multi-year cycle of institutional studies supporting institutional-level ULC assessment

Initiative	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Senior Survey (semi-annual)	Aug-Dec, May	Aug-Dec, May	Aug-Dec, May	Aug-Dec, May
Alumni Survey (bi-annual)		Summer 2014: graduates from Aug, Dec 2011, May, Aug, Dec 2012, May 2013		Summer 2016: graduates from Aug, Dec 2013, May, Aug, Dec 2014, May 2015
NSSE ULCs, GLI, HIP	NSSE 2.0			NSSE 2.0
NSLVE-Tufts ULC #2, direct	Periodic reports delivered from Tufts University CIRCLE to AAAS. Current participation agreement runs through 2018. Tufts delivers summary reports to participating institutions. Reports provide Winthrop with a direct measure (voting behavior) associated with ULC #2: Personal and Social Responsibility.			

Results from Winthrop's institution level studies inform resource planning and allocations (budgets, personnel, space and equipment needs), new initiatives and, when possible, program-level feedback. Intra-institutional transparency is achieved when results of institutional studies (e.g., PSRI and the NSLVE) are distributed to senior administrators, program directors, and unit assessment coordinators who in turn share and discuss findings with unit professionals, identifying opportunities to improve programs and learning. Results inform assessment of Winthrop's mission to provide quality learning opportunities in the context of public service.

Community/public service (SACSCOC CS 3.3.1.5)

To accomplish its mission in the context of community/public service, civic learning opportunities are offered through academic degree programs and student support initiatives such as Leadership, TRiO, Honors, McNair Scholars, Teaching Fellows, Close Scholars, Center for Career and Civic Engagement, and the West Forum. Winthrop partners with national organizations such as Campus Compact and the AAC&U Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement (CLDE) to deliver programs and learning opportunities in the context of community/public service, thereby supporting *Winthrop's goal (#4) to forge new and solidify existing government, organizational, and business partnerships that create mutual benefit*.

Academic and student support service units are encouraged to integrate assessment of their initiatives associated with community service into their OARS and annual reports. External assessment of Winthrop's effectiveness in creating learning environments supporting achievement of community/public service, civic engagement, and social responsibility is demonstrated by the University's achievement of two national recognitions related to community/public service. In 2015, Winthrop was again awarded the elective Carnegie Classification for Community Engagement following an extensive campus-wide program assessment initiative spearheaded by the Division of Student Life, Center for Career and Civic Engagement. In 2014, Winthrop was, for the ninth time, named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll following its comprehensive external review.

Undergraduate University Level Competencies (ULCs)

Winthrop established ULCs in 2010 following a campus-wide assessment initiative involving a content analysis of SLOs assessment and achievements reported in Winthrop OARS. The process, documented in a series of reports, involved faculty and student life committee members of an ad hoc university-wide Academic Assessment Committee examining assessment results and improvement reports from OARS (AY 2007-08 and 2008-09), NSSE 2009 results and the SC 2009 report, *Leveraging Higher Education for a Stronger SC,* as well as reporting obligations from federal and state agencies. Articulation of ULCs also took into consideration the AAC&U Core Commitments Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs); Winthrop is a member of the 23 institution AAC&U Core Commitments Leadership Consortium. Winthrop intentionally integrates community/public service into two of its university level competencies (ULCs), ULC #2 (Personal and Social Responsibility) and ULC #3 (Interconnectedness and Diversity).

AAAS provides data to support institutional-level assessment of ULCs. Data from the NSSE 2.0 core items and topical modules on civic engagement and diversity, graduating senior survey, and alumni survey provide indirect metrics associated with respondents' perceptions of Winthrop's learning climate supporting achievement of the four ULCs.

NSSE 2014 also provided college-level reports (both major field reports and customized degree-level reports of respondents' self-reported experiences) which may inform program level assessment of ULCs. Customized NSSE reports (e.g., Major Field Reports and Customized Reports generated through Institutional Report Builder) are available to college deans when respondent threshold counts imposed by NSSE are met. Major Field reports (MFR) and customized degree-level reports were reported to academic unit deans in 2014. Academic administrators were asked to share NSSE 2014 results with their respective faculty members and other professional staff. While low respondent counts in MFR and customized degree reports preclude statistical analysis, campus professionals requested these reports to examine response patterns and inform discussions about possible opportunities to improve programming.

Academic and student life program personnel assessing student achievements of Winthrop's ULCs are encouraged to examine a June 2015 AAC&U publication on civic learning. The monograph provides writing prompts related to civic learning in varied contexts: arts and humanities, STEM, and Social Sciences. The prompts may be integrated or adapted in courses or other enriching experience to assess civic responsibility and civic learning, elements of Winthrop's ULC # Personal and Social Responsibility.

University College assesses writing (an element of ULC # 4) using student artifacts from general education core courses (e.g., Human Experience and Critical Reading, Thinking and Writing), an internally-developed rubric, and trained faculty raters. Undergraduate degree programs are expected to assess ULC proficiencies among their upper level baccalaureate degree candidates. UG degree programs with specialized program accreditation may integrate ULC assessment with SLOs prescribed by their accrediting organizations.

Winthrop acquired the Blackboard (Bb) Learn application, *Bb Rubrics*, in 2013, and, after obtaining permission from AAC&U, uploaded the 16 VALUE rubrics (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) into Winthrop's *Bb Rubrics* infrastructure in 2014. The VALUE rubrics were developed under the auspices of the AAC&U as part of its Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative[6]. Direct assessment of student artifacts associated with the Global Learning Initiative (GLI) (which includes elements of ULCs two and three) will commence fall 2015 using student artifacts uploaded into *Bb* and the VALUE rubrics. The decision to assess student artifacts associated with the GLI is in response to feedback from Dr.

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[6] *The AAC&U VALUE rubrics were developed with support by grants from The State Farm Companies Foundation and the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE), the formal project ran from May 2007 through April 2010.*

Penelope Pynes who recommended additional direct assessment during her mid-point review of Winthrop's GLI. Program faculties and other campus professionals interested in adopting or adapting one or more of the VALUE rubrics should contact Winthrop's Director of Online Learning for Blackboard Learn support needs or the Director of Assessment for consultancy on integrating VALUE rubrics into senior assessment of ULC proficiencies.

IE Transparency

Winthrop uses multiple measures to demonstrate IE including enrollment, credit hour production, and degree completions. Student profiles for new first year, transfers, undergraduates and graduates are publicly available through the federal website for Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), the College Navigator, and the Whitehouse College Affordability and Transparency Scorecard web site.   Organizations like *College Measures* use IPEDS data to produce interactive public web sites enabling consumers to compare institutions on key metrics. Winthrop data are also available on the SC State Agency Accountability Reports web site (2014 report found here; current and archived state accountability reports are found on this Winthrop web site and the SC Commission on Higher Education (CHE) data and publications web site.

Student Achievements Transparency – an updated mandate (FR 4.1)

In June 2014 the SACSCOC Board approved a new policy: *Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure*. *This policy outlines in one document an institution's obligations to provide information that is complete, accurate, timely, accessible, clear and sufficient. Among the 6 items listed, Item 4 addresses one of the standards of the Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) requiring that SACSCOC includes in its standards or in a policy the requirement that an institution publishes statements of its goals for student achievement and the success of students in achieving those goals. In the future, our Institutional Profile will ask institutions to record the website where it displays this information to the public* (source: email communication from Dr. Belle Whelan to Winthrop's SACSCOC Liaison 20141024). Item four in the new policy is listed below.

> *. . . The institution publishes statements of its goals for student achievement and the success of students in achieving those goals. Information on student success may include reliable information in retention, graduation, course completion, licensure examinations, and job placement rates and other measures of student success appropriate to institutional mission. . . .*

Public disclosure of student achievement goals addresses both undergraduate and graduate student goal achievement. Guided by federal, state and accreditation reporting obligations, Winthrop's metrics to track student achievement include retention, graduation, course

completion, and pass- rates on credentialing examinations, all verifiable as *complete, accurate, timely, accessible, clear and sufficient* as currently evidenced by documentation on Winthrop's [Student Achievement Goals](#) web site, the SC [CHEMIS](#) web site, the NCES [IPEDS web site](#), and Winthrop's AAAS web sites ([Facts and Information](#)).

Winthrop's KPIs are an internal tool used by senior administrators to monitor IE focused on institutional goals, strategic priorities and objectives articulated in Winthrop's state accountability report. Internal stakeholders are encouraged to monitor the 2014 SACSCOC policy on Student Achievements Transparency and ensure Winthrop's goals for student achievement are documented, assessed, and communicated to the public in ways that meet the SACSCOC policy on *[Institutional Obligations for Public Disclosure](#)*.

Comparative data on student outcomes and achievements
Federal agencies, [CHEA](#), and regional accrediting organizations do not have a shared understanding of operational definitions for constructs like *success, student achievement*, *graduation outcomes*, *job placement rates*, or *employment related to the degree or major;* neither do disciplines and fields e.g., arts, humanities, natural and social sciences, business, and education*.* State agencies associated with higher education, budgeting and labor do not use standardized terminology, metrics, or technology when tracking and reporting *job placement rates* in their respective agencies. While government and accrediting agencies are increasingly interested in IE as it relates to jobs and other graduation outcomes, relevant assessment metrics cannot be identified, implemented or publicly reported without articulation and institutional consensus about operational definitions for relevant constructs and metrics.

Winthrop's 2013 Employment Report of University graduates from FY 2011-12 included Winthrop's graduation data as reported to IPEDS and degree completions reported to the SC Commission on Higher Education (CHE). Funded by a federal grant from the Bureau of Labor Statics, data files from the SC CHE and the SC Department of Employment Workforce (DEW) were matched to produce an employment and salary report describing college/university graduates by CIP codes and the North American Industrial Classification System ([NAICS](#)) codes. Delimitations of the matched data files are described below.

- The matched data file did not capture information about alumni who worked out of state or for the military, earned > 1 degree, attended graduate school, participated in initiatives like the Peace Corp, or stayed home to care for dependents.
- Matching stopped after a graduate's first instance of SC employment was identified. No logic was used to search records for multiple in-state jobs or highest reported salary.
- No interstate data-sharing was used to capture employment data for graduates working out-of-state.

- ***Wage range*** data were only provided if alumni were employed in South Carolina during one or more of the four quarters in 2012.
- No documentation was provided to determine if an individual's reported wage range represented single or multiple reporting quarters, or graduates' highest salaries for the given time frame.

In the absence of consensus on operational definitions for metrics used to assess student achievements, the public is unable to compare success of students across schools or programs.
- Federal agencies like the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the Department of Education continue working in silos, obstructing the ability of higher education institutions to track alumni graduation employment outcomes nationally.
- States use a myriad of employment data systems, confounding the ability of higher education institutions to track student success related to employment beyond the home state of the institution.
- The IPEDS method of documenting graduation rates and completions continues to be a flawed system that ignores *transfer student* data.

Administrative units are responsible for providing evidence of compliance with SACSCOC standards including (but not limited to) CS 3.3.1.2.

> *The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and* ***provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in administrative support services.***

Expected outcomes for administrative support units may be described as program goals or outcomes. *Administrative support service units normally include finance, administrative facilities, administrative services, development/advancement, the president's office, etc.*[7] Winthrop's administrative units encompass areas represented in the Executive Leadership Council (ELC), including the Divisions of Academic Affairs (academic administrators), Student Life, Access and Enrollment Management, Finance and Business, Institutional Advancement, Alumni and Development, University Relations and Athletics.

Administrative reporting obligations documented in the SACSCOC Resource Manual (p. 51) enumerate relevant questions, documents needed, cross-referenced standards, guidelines, policies and positions that personnel in administrative units are expected to address in their assessment plan and improvement reports documented in OARS.

SACSCOC expects administrative documentation to answers the following questions.

- *How are expected outcomes clearly defined in measurable terms for each unit?*
- *What is the evidence of assessment activities for each unit?*
- *How are periodic reviews used for improvements?*
- *How does the institution's use of assessment results improve administrative support services?*
- *What assessment instruments were used and why were they selected? Were multiple assessment methods used? If so, describe.*
- *If Winthrop used sampling, why were the sampling and findings an appropriate representation of Winthrop's administrative units?*

Required Documentation

- *Definition of institution's administrative support service unit*
- *Documentation of expected outcomes for administrative support services*
- *Documentation of the evaluation of those outcomes*

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[7] http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Resource%20Manual.pdf p. 51

- *Documentation of the use of the findings from assessment to improve the institution*
- *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 a (3) case as to why sampling and assessment findings are an appropriate representation of the institution's units*

Reference to Commission Documents *"Distance and Correspondence Education"*
Cross References *Core Requirement 2.5*

Functional units whose primary responsibilities include Recruitment, Enrollment, Financial Aid, Control of Finances, Financial Stability, Computing and Information Technology, Corporate Structure, Physical Facilities Management, Human Resources, Institutional Advancement, Development, Alumni, and Athletics are expected to annually update their OARS assessment plan and improvement reports when documenting evidence of compliance with SACSCOC standards specific to their areas (See Appendix A).

Administrative Units - OARS

SACSCOC requires multiple continuous years of evidence that results from program goals/outcomes assessment **were** used to make decisions and take actions. Winthrop's most recent decennial reaffirmation was in 2011, so evidence of continuous program outcomes assessment for administrative units should be available from 2011 going forward. Data from 2011-16 administrative OARS will be integrated into relevant standards required for Winthrop's SACSCOC Fifth Year Interim Report due March 2017. In cases where organizational changes have occurred since 2011, current administrative units are advised to provide brief narratives (in OARS) explaining organizational updates. The OARS section labeled *Level of Performance* may also be described as *targeted success criteria* or *performance threshold*s. Performance levels achieved should be reported in the *Results* section of the OARS.

The *SACSCOC Resource Manual* is periodically updated, and the most current edition is the basis for administrative units to determine which standards, policies, guidelines and position statements are related to administrative functions and need to be cross-referenced. For each SACSCOC standard, the Resource Manual lists questions SACSCOC reviewers will ask and sources of evidence SACSCOC reviewers will expect to examine. Unit personnel responsible for reporting assessment plans and improvement reports in OARS should review the SACSCOC Resource Manual periodically and ensure administrative unit assessment strategies and improvement reports include data elements that SACSCOC reviewers need to verify Winthrop's compliance with SACSCOC standards. The SACSCOC Board meets in June and December; updates generally show up 2-3 months following board actions but can occur at other times as

well. AAAS recommends administrative personnel responsible for documenting compliance with SACSCOC standards, policies, guidelines, and positions monitor SACSCOC URLs for periodic updates, paying particular attention to web changes and updates made following the University's most recent decennial reaffirmation or fifth-year report.

Administrative assessment plans and improvement reports in OARS should answer the following questions (according to current SACSCOC Resource Manual CS 3.3.1):

- *What is the unit trying to do (program goals, outcomes, functions)*

    - *How do administrators know if unit personnel are accomplishing goals, outcomes, and functions? What evidence is archived and provided to internal and external stakeholders about the unit's effectiveness achieving its goals? How is unit effectiveness demonstrated? What are performance thresholds (levels of performance) that define how well goals are achieved?*

    - *How can unit personnel improve effectiveness and operational efficiencies?*

- *How does the work produced by this unit support*

    - *achievement of Winthrop's mission*

    - *achievement of Winthrop's goals, strategic priorities and objectives documented in Winthrop's State Accountability Report*

    - *internal customers including students, campus employees*

    - *external customers including regulatory agencies, partners and alumni*

- *What is being assessed e.g., processes, resources (facilities, staffing, fiscal, entre- and intrapreneurship), outcomes*

Data Elements and Sources

Quantitative and qualitative data needed for reports documenting compliance with federal and state regulations as well as accrediting organizations are integrated into administrative unit assessment plans and improvement reports. Data elements to be referenced in administrative assessment plans and improvement reports documented in OARS include metrics used in Winthrop's KPIs, resource allocations (fiscal, physical, human), and institutional goals, strategic priorities and objectives documented in the University's annual SC accountability report. Data sources may also include reports, budgets, letters to or from external organizations (e.g., auditors, federal, state, and local government agencies), internal status reports, annual reports or interim reports conveyed to senior administrators regarding efforts and achievements associated with Winthrop's mission, institutional goals, strategic priorities and objectives. Email distribution of institutional assessment results reports (e.g., NSSE, Graduating Senior

Survey and Alumni Survey) come with a reminder for unit administrators to share and discuss the reports with their unit personnel, focusing on how results might inform program improvements within units. Consequently, minutes of meetings at which unit administrators discuss institutional assessment results reports with their personnel and consider how findings inform the unit's program goals are another form of evidence administrative units should retain to demonstrate using assessment results for program improvements.

Evidentiary documentation must be labeled and dated. When referencing multi-page documents, unit personnel are to direct readers to the specific area (page number, report section, year, etc.) of the report offered as evidence. When evidentiary documents are cited in OARS, the citation must include information on where the actual documents are archived and provide contact information for external reviewers who may ask to examine the original documents.

Administrative units are advised to annually review and align their unit goals and initiatives to Winthrop's goals, priorities and objectives as reported to SC CHE.

Purpose: Periodic comprehensive review of administrative, academic and student support programs is integral to IE assessment, a SACSCOC expectation. Winthrop's annual reporting structure (OARS) integrates data elements relevant to periodic comprehensive reviews: program goals, learning outcomes, evidence-based improvements, and alignment with institutional mission, resources and priorities. Additional data sources include unit-level annual reports conveyed to senior administrators and the university President and other documents reporting achievements framed in the context of Winthrop's goals, strategic priorities and objectives.

Comprehensive Administrative and Support Unit Reviews (CASUR)

Senior administrators are responsible for ensuring completion of periodic comprehensive administrative and support unit reviews that transcend annual assessment reports and documentation of evidence-based actions. SACSCOC does not mandate the frequency or format of episodic administrative and support unit reviews, but considers them an element of *Institutional Effectiveness* (CS 3.3.1.2 and CS 3.3.1.3 cross-referenced with CR 2.5). A web scan indicates a common time frame for periodic comprehensive administrative and support unit reviews in higher education is five to seven years. Comprehensive reviews may also happen during transitional institutional events. Examples of processes, elements, and timeframes associated with administrative and support unit reviews are available across most accreditation regions including SACSCOC. The publicly available examples of administrative program reviews (below) were identified during spring 2015.

Administrative Unit (Program) Reviews
- Georgia State University Administrative and Support Unit Reviews
- 2014-15 Washburn University Program Review Guide for Administrative Units
- 2013 UT-Austin, framework for assessing administrative and student support service units
- Emory University Administrative Units Assessment
- University of Kentucky Administrative Unit Assessment, 2012 J. Pet-Armacost & R. Armacost
- Western Carolina assessment and program reviews, administrative units
- Northwestern University academic and administrative program reviews, the process
- Administrative assessment guidelines, University of Southern Mississippi (USM)
- Assessment Resources for Administrative and Support Units, Florida Atlantic University

Academic Program Reviews (APR)

All academic degree programs (Baccalaureate, Masters and Certificates) are required to periodically undergo comprehensive academic program review to ensure Winthrop continues offering high-caliber academic programs consistent with emerging best practices. APR Guidelines describe required program review processes; processes accommodate the needs of non-accredited academic programs and academic programs accredited or approved by discipline-specific organizations. APRs usually follow a five- to seven-year cycle in which academic units assess major strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and concerns in the areas of quality, demand, and resources. Programs with specialized program accreditation or approval follow their discipline-based program review cycles and fulfill reporting obligations of their specialized accreditation-approval program review processes which meet or exceed Winthrop's APR guidelines. Winthrop's APR guidelines are reviewed and periodically updated informed by changes in external reporting obligations and internal user feedback. Winthrop's APR web site contains details on roles/responsibilities, policies/procedures, report formats and timelines.

Background: Guidelines for conducting APRs were initially developed by the SC CHE with input from academic officers at each of the public higher education institutions. Until December 2000, CHE coordinated a statewide review of academic offerings in disciplines that did not have specialized accrediting entities. State budget cuts forced CHE to abandon all such reviews except those related to teacher certification or teacher advancement. In March 2010, CHE had to dissolve its partnership with SC Department of Education and NCATE (now known as the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, CAEP). Winthrop continues comprehensive academic program review as a quality assurance best practice.

Process: The general APR process is similar for programs with or without specialized accreditation or approval. Program faculties and unit administrators conduct a self-study guided by Winthrop's APR format or the discipline's accreditation or approval format. Unit academic administrators ensure degree program web sites accurately portray official degree titles, concentrations, tracks, and options. Once the internal self-study is finalized, an external peer review process is initiated, after which an external review team (ERT) report is prepared and conveyed to internal administrators, program faculties, and AAAS. Findings from the internal self-study and external review process and report are examined by internal stakeholders and used by program faculties and administrators to prepare action plans for improvements and resource allocation. Action plans may include curricular actions, decisions about physical facilities, learning spaces, or staffing.

Central Repository: All academic programs (both non-accredited and accredited-approved academic programs) are required to convey electronic (E-) copies of their APR documents to

AAAS and retain copies (electronic and/or paper) within their own units. Documents for AAAS include internal self-studies, reports of findings from ERTs, and follow-up action-plan reports from program faculties and administrators describing next steps being taken that were informed by the program review process. For programs with specialized accreditation or approval, send e-copies of all letters from the specialized accreditation-approval organization associated with the accreditation-approval status of Winthrop's accredited-approved program to AAAS (See SACSCOC CS. 3.13.1). E-documents conveyed to AAAS should also include supporting evidence related to the self-study. In the self-study, reference e-documents stored in repositories such as Activity Insight, Primary Instructor Credentialing System, OARS, Blackboard, and Live Text in such a way that ERT reviewers and SACSCOC teams may obtain access as needed to examine the evidence.

Undergraduate program reviews

NSSE items provide an indirect measure of respondents' self-reported perceptions and experiences and provide undergraduate programs with a measure of the pervasiveness of learning opportunities associated with Winthrop's ULCs, the GLI, and skills desired by employers. Program faculties and academic administrators involved with APRs for undergraduate programs are encouraged to peruse *mapping NSSE core items to SACSCOC* standards. In 2014, Winthrop disseminated NSSE 2.0 major field reports and customized senior results to degree-granting colleges and in some cases to field/discipline level program faculties.

Reporting obligations when >50% of the academic program delivered online

In cases when more than 50% of an academic program is delivered online or via other distance-correspondence environments, program faculties and administrators must address all SACSCOC standards, policies, guidelines and positions cross-referenced and associated with distance or correspondence learning environments. The URLs below, though not exhaustive, illustrate standards, guidelines, policies, procedures and best practices associated with distance and correspondence education.

- http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/Resource%20Manual.pdf pg. 127-137
- http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/DistanceCorrespondenceEducation.pdf
- http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/Guidelines%20for%20Addressing%20Distance%20and%20Correspondence%20Education.pdf
- http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/commadap.pdf

Graduate programs

APRs for graduate programs are guided by the same general processes used for undergraduate academic program reviews. With regard to SACSCOC, graduate program faculties and administrators must address all subsections (currently four) of CS 3.6 (Graduate Programs)

along with cross-referenced standards, policies, procedures, guidelines and position statements referenced in the Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation (2012, second printing in 2013) and/or posted on the [SACSCOC web site](). Examples of cross-referenced standards include (but are not limited to) those related to distance and online learning, adequate full time qualified instructional faculty, institutional effectiveness related to research, and access to adequate library and support services.

> **CS 3.6.1: Post-baccalaureate program rigor** is demonstrated by comparing breadth and depth of learning expectations in graduate curricula with learning expectations in a related undergraduate curriculum. Data sources should include student artifacts, rating tools (rubrics) illustrating the learning elements to be demonstrated in the student artifact and levels of proficiency. Narrative and examples (evidence) associated with comparison of learning expectations for graduate students vis-à-vis undergraduate students is appropriate.

> **CS 3.6.2: Graduate curricula include knowledge of the literature** of the discipline and ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice. In most cases, graduate program faculties are expected to aggregate culminating works associated with graduate research and scholarship in the discipline and to document how students' works demonstrate depth and breadth of graduate level proficiency with the literature of the discipline.

> **CS 3.6.3: The number of graduate credits earned at the institution relative to the total number of credits required for the degree** is documented. CS 3.6.3 documentation should include narrative about how Winthrop identifies on its transcript the names of institutions from which transfer courses that count toward the Winthrop graduate degree were taken. If relevant, the APR narrative for graduate programs should also describe how Winthrop identifies on its transcript that the graduate degree awarded is a collaborative degree and provide evidence (e.g., redacted transcript).

> **CS 3.6.4: Document process whereby policies relevant to the graduate program are communicated to prospective and current students**. APR narratives should describe the evidence that graduate program faculties **define and publish requirements** for this graduate or post-baccalaureate professional program of study and should demonstrate that all appropriate publications provide **clear, complete, and consistent information** about the graduate program being reviewed. Provide URLs for the graduate program from both the graduate school and the academic department/college in which the graduate program is housed.

Graduate program directors may want to use resources available through the Council of Graduate Studies (CGS). As a member of CGS, Winthrop graduate program directors and faculties have access to reports associated with graduate recruitment, enrollment, retention and completions that may provide benchmarks for external comparisons. Contact the Graduate School for more information on CGS access.

APPENDIX A
SACSCOC Standards and Requirements (source: SACSCOC Resource Manual, p. 103)
Note: bolded standards represent changes since Winthrop's 2011 decennial reaffirmation

Column 1	The number of the standard/requirement (CR: Section2; CS: Section 3; FR: Section 4)
Column 2	Descriptor of the particular standard
Column 3	Template available when providing documentation in support of compliance
Column 4	Related standards, documents, policies
Column 5	Standard reviewed as part of the Fifth-Year Interim Report
Column 6	Winthrop needs to provide an institutional policy in its response to the standard
Column 7	Reviewed by On-Site Committee regardless of Off- Site Committee findings

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Section Number	Brief Description	Template Available	Commission Policy Related To Standard	Reviewed at 5th Year	Institutional Policy Required	Reviewed by Off & On-Site Reaffirmations
1.1	Integrity		X			
2.1	Degree-Granting Authority					
2.2	Governing Board	X	X			
2.3	CEO		X			
2.4	Institutional Mission		X			
2.5	Institutional Effectiveness (IE)	X				
2.6	Continuous Operation					
2.7.1	Program Length	X	X			
2.7.2	Program Content		X			
2.7.3	General Education		X			X
2.7.4	Coursework for Degrees		X			
2.8	**# full-time faculty members** adequate to support institutional mission **ensure quality & integrity of each of its academic programs**	X	X	X		X
2.9	Learning Resources and Services		X			

Section Number	Brief Description	Template Available	Commission Policy Related To Standard	Reviewed at 5th Year	Institutional Policy Required	Reviewed by Off & On-Site Reaffirmations
2.10	Student Support Services		X	X		X
2.11.1	Financial Resources	X				
2.11.2	Physical Resources	X	X			
2.12	QEP		X			

Comprehensive Standards						
1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
Section Number	**Brief Description**	**Template Available**	**Commission Policy Related To Standard**	**Reviewed at 5th Year**	**Institutional Policy Required**	**Reviewed by Off & On-Site Reaffirmations**
3.1.1	Mission					
3.2.1	CEO evaluation, selection					
3.2.2	Governing board control		X		X	
3.2.3	Board conflict of interest		X		X	
3.2.4	External influence					
3.2.5	Board dismissal		X		X	
3.2.6	Distinction - BOT & administration				X	
3.2.7	Organizational structure					
3.2.8	Qualified officers: admin & academic	X	X	X		X
3.2.9	Personnel appointment		X		X	
3.2.10	Administrative staff evaluations		X			
3.2.11	Intercollegiate athletics control					
3.2.12	Fund-raising activities					
3.2.13	Institution-related foundations					
3.2.14	Intellectual property		X		X	
3.3.1.1	IE – ed programs		X	X		X
3.3.1.2	IE – admin support services		X			
3.3.1.3	IE – academic & student support		X			

3.3.1.4	IE – research					
3.3.1.5	IE – community, public service					
3.3.2	QEP		X			
3.4.1	Academic program approval					
3.4.2	Continuing ed, service programs					
3.4.3	Admission policies		X	X	X	X
3.4.4	Acceptance of academic credit		X		X	
3.4.5	Academic policies		X		X	
3.4.6	Practices for awarding credit		X			
3.4.7	Consortial relationships, contractual agreements		X			
3.4.8	Noncredit to credit					
3.4.9	Academic support services		X			
3.4.10	Responsibility for curriculum		X			
3.4.11	Academic program coordination		X	X		X
3.4.12	Technology use		X			
3.5.1	General education competencies	X	X			
3.5.2	Institutional credits for an UG degree		X			
3.5.3	UG program requirements		X			
3.5.4	Terminal degrees of faculty	X	X			
3.6.1	Post-baccalaureate program rigor	X				
3.6.2	Graduate curriculum					

3.6.3	Institutional credits for graduate degree	X	X			
3.6.4	Post-bac program requirements		X			
3.7.1	Faculty competence	X	X			
3.7.2	Faculty evaluation					
3.7.3	Faculty development					
3.7.4	Academic freedom		X		X	
3.7.5	Faculty role in governance		X		X	
3.8.1	Learning, info resources		X			
3.8.2	Instruction library use		X			
3.8.3	Qualified staff	X				
3.9.1	Student rights		X		X	
3.9.2	Student records		X			
3.9.3	Qualified staff	X				
3.10.1	Financial stability		X			
3.10.2	Financial aid audits			X		X
3.10.3	Control of finances		X			
3.10.4	Sponsored research, external funds					
3.11.1	Physical resources					
3.11.2	Institutional environment					
3.11.3	Physical facilities		X	X		X
3.12.1	Substantive change		X		X	
3.13	**Updated, Handout**					
3.13.1	**Accreditation Decisions other agencies**		X	X	X	X
3.13.2	**Collaborative Academic Arrangements: Policy and Procedures**					

Section Number	Brief Description	Template Available	Commission Policy Related To Standard	Reviewed at 5th Year	Institutional Policy Required	Reviewed by Off & On-Site Reaffirmations
3.13.3	**Complaint Procedures**			X		
3.13.4.a	**Review of institution's distance learning programs**	The institution **must incorporate an assessment of its compliance with standards that apply to its distance and correspondence education programs and courses.** Reviewed in Fifth-Year decennial reaffirmation.				
3.13.4.b	**Description of system operation or corporate structure**	Provide a description of the system operation and structure or the corporate structure if this applies (does not apply to Winthrop)				
3.14.1	**Publication of accreditation status**			X		

Federal Requirements

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Section Number	Brief Description	Template Available	Commission Policy Related To Standard	Reviewed at 5th Year	Institutional Policy Required	Reviewed by Off & On-Site Reaffirmations
4.1	Student achievement			X		X
4.2	Program curriculum		X	X		X
4.3	Publication of policies		X	X	X	X
4.4	Program length		X	X		X
4.5	Student complaints		X	X	X	X
4.6	Recruitment materials		X	X		X
4.7	Title IV		X	X		X
4.8.1	**Distance Learning (DL) verification**			X		X
4.8.2	**DL privacy**		X	X	X	X
4.8.3	**DL fees notification**		X	X	X	X
4.9	**Credit Hours**		X	X	X	X

Appendix B

SACSCOC [Federal Requirements (FR)](#)

Implicit in every FR mandating a policy or procedure is the expectation that the policy or procedure is in writing and has been approved through appropriate institutional processes, published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by the policy or procedure, and implemented and enforced by the institution. Winthrop's policies and procedures repository is accessible [here](#). All FR must be addressed in both the decennial reaffirmation Compliance Report and the Fifth-Year Interim Report. All cross-referenced standards must be integrated into compliance narratives for the Fifth-Year Interim Report and the Decennial Reaffirmation Compliance Report.

4.1 The institution **evaluates success with respect to student achievement** including course completions, degree completions, performance on state licensing and professional credentialing examinations, and job placement rates. **Winthrop's mandated web site providing public transparency of *[Student Achievement Goals](#)*** includes (but is not limited to) publicly reported data on retention, graduation rates and performance on professional credentialing examinations. **Cross-reference** with CR 2.5, CS 3.3.1.1, expected threshold of achievement for each criterion and the rationale for why each is appropriate, documentation of data used to demonstrate achievement of goals, sample documentation of student achievement such as trend data showing course completion by discipline, job placement by degree programs, follow-up with students who have graduated See [Resource Manual](#), p. 93

4.2 The institution's curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded. **Cross reference** with SACSCOC CR 2.4; CR 2.7.2; CR 2.7.3; CS 3.1.1; CS 3.5.1; CS 3.5.3, and commission documents as appropriate, e.g., "*[Distance and Correspondence Education](#)*", See [Resource Manual](#), p. 94.

4.3 The institution makes available to students and the public [current academic calendars](#), grading policies, ([Plus-Minus grades](#), [grade change](#), [grade reports](#), [GPA required for UG degree](#)) [Policies Repository](#), and [refund policies](#) (e.g., [fee adjustments for courses dropped-withdrawn](#), [fee adjustment and refund](#)). Cross-reference with Principle 1 (Integrity), CS 3.4.5, and Commission Documents as appropriate: "*[Distance and Correspondence Education](#)*", "[Integrity and Accuracy in Institutional Representation](#)", "[Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status](#)" and/or "[Developing Policy and Procedures Document](#)." See [Resource Manual](#), p. 95

4.4 Program length is appropriate for each of the institution's educational programs. Cross reference with CR 2.7.2, CR 2.7.3, and CS 3.4.1. See [Resource Manual](#), p. 95.

4.5 The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. Cross-reference with CS 3.13.1, commission documents *"[Complaint Procedures](#)*

against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions", "Distance and Correspondence Education", and "Developing Policy and Procedures Documents". See Resource Manual, p. 96

4.6 Recruitment materials accurately represent institution's practices and policies. Cross-reference with Principle 1.1 (Integrity), Comprehensive Standard 3.4.3, commission documents *"Developing Policy and Procedures Documents", "Distance and Correspondence Education", "Integrity and Accuracy in Institutional Representation", and "Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status".* See Resource Manual, p. 97

4.7 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under **Title IV of the 1998 Higher Education Amendments.** Cross-reference Principle 1 and CS 3.10.1 including: Most recent federal awards/financial aid audit. Provide copies of all recent, relevant correspondence from the U.S. DOE. Reference Commission document on "Integrity and Accuracy in Institutional Representation". Questions to answer in the Interim Report and decennial compliance report*: Do the independent audits of the institution's financial aid programs evidence significant noncompliance? What is the institution's student loan default rate? Is the institution aware of infractions to regulations which would jeopardize Title IV funding? Are there significant impending litigation issues with respect to financial aid activities? Have complaints related to financial aid been filed with the Department of Education regarding this institution? What issues exist with Title IV programs for the institution, if any?* See Resource Manual, p. 97-98.

4.8 An institution that offers distance or correspondence education documents each of the following: (Distance and correspondence education, pp. 98-99)
    4.8.1 Verify student identity
    4.8.2 Protect student privacy
    4.8.3 Written procedure notifying students of projected additional fees
Cross-reference CS 3.13.1-5 and as appropriate, Commission Documents: "Developing Policy and Procedures Documents", "Distance and Correspondence Education", "Integrity and Accuracy in Institutional Representation" , "Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status", "Substantive Change for Accredited Institutions". See Resource Manual, p. 99

4.9 The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. See policies on "Credit Hours", "Substantive Change", and "Developing Policies and Procedures Documents". Cross-reference with C.R. 2.7, C.S. 3.4.6, and F.R. 4.4. See Resource Manual, p. 100