

Frequently Asked Questions about WASC

1. WHAT IS WASC?

The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) is the accrediting body for the western region of the United States. Accreditation is the process for evaluating and assuring the quality of educational institutions and programs. WASC requires that we demonstrate that we are taking real steps to fulfill our mission, are measuring the effectiveness of those steps, and are using the results of those measurements to improve what we do.

2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO FRESNO STATE?

Accreditation assures stakeholders that a university is rigorously evaluated and meets or exceeds the accreditation standards. Accreditation is also required for our students to qualify for participation in federal financial aid programs. The accreditation process is more than an administrative hurdle; it is an opportunity for us to discuss what is important to Fresno State and to focus on reaching those goals.

3. WHAT ARE THE WASC STANDARDS AND WHERE CAN THEY BE FOUND?

Standards of accreditation are the principles used as a basis for judgment in accreditation reviews. WASC has four Standards that flow from three Core Commitments. They are used to guide institutions in assessing institutional performance, to identify areas needing improvement, and to serve as the basis for judgment of the institution by evaluation teams and the Senior College and University Commission. The standards are available in the WASC Handbook at: <http://www.wascsenior.org/resources/handbook-accreditation-2013>.

4. WHAT ARE THE WASC “CORE COMPETENCIES?”

As defined in WASC Standard 2, Criterion for Review 2.2, institutions report on graduating students’ levels of performance in five core competencies common to all degrees: written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and information literacy.

5. WHAT DOES WASC MEAN BY THE “MEANING, QUALITY, AND INTEGRITY OF THE DEGREE?”

In WASC usage, this phrase refers to the goals, coherence, sequencing, alignment, resourcing, and overall quality of the educational experience leading to conferral of an institution’s degree.

6. HOW DO STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT RELATE TO WASC?

WASC Criterion for Review 2.6 requires “The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated learning outcomes and established standards of

performance”. Criteria for Review 4.2 states that “Assessment of teaching, learning and the campus environment... is undertaken, used for improvement, and incorporated into institutional planning processes”. The assessment of student learning appears in other criteria for review and is directly related to WASC’s core commitment to quality and improvement.

7. WHAT IS A “CRITERION FOR REVIEW?”

A Criterion for Review (CFR) is a statement in relation to which an institution is reviewed. Criteria for review are more specific than the four Standards of Accreditation and are intended to define and explain the Standards. Substantial compliance with both the Standards and Criteria for Review is required by state and federal laws for accreditation. CFRs also provide guidance to institutions and form the basis for Commission decisions about an institution’s accreditation status.

8. WHAT ARE THE TIMELINES FOR FRESNO STATE WASC REVIEW?

- August 20, 2014 – Self Study document due
- November 20, 2014 – Off site review (a SKYPE call where our outside review team asks questions, makes preliminary findings based on the institutional report and identifies the lines of inquiry which the team will focus on when they visit campus).
- October 20-23, 2015 - Accreditation visit (where the outside review team visits campus and meets with representatives to follow up on outstanding issues and verify or revise its preliminary findings.).

9. WHERE CAN I FIND FRESNO STATE’S WASC ACCREDITATION DOCUMENTS?

Fresno State’s accreditation documents may be found at <http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/wasc/resources>.

10. WHO SERVES ON THE WASC COMMITTEE ON CAMPUS?

Leadership for our WASC Reaccreditation efforts comes from an Executive Committee and a larger Steering Committee. Membership for each committee can be found under the “Committees” link at <http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/wasc/committees>.

11. IF I HAVE SUGGESTIONS OR COMMENTS TO THE WASC PROCESS OR DOCUMENTS, WHERE CAN I SUBMIT MY INPUT?

You may submit your comments or suggestions through this form (<http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/wasc/feedback.html>). In addition, members of the WASC Committee will be reaching out to various campus constituents over the coming months to inform others of the process and solicit feedback. This will include several open campus forums.