

SACS Review and Reaffirmation Process

Richard Bland College is now in the first phase of the process for reaffirmation of accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The association has made major changes in the methods used during our last reaffirmation review in 1996-1998. RBC must now submit two separate documents to the Commission on Colleges for review, *The Compliance Certification* and *The Quality Enhancement Plan*. The first document consists of a compliance certification of core requirements and comprehensive standards.

The RBC Leadership Team has decided to begin the process with a Compliance Certification Audit. This process will allow us to determine those areas where we are not in full compliance and, before the final report is due, bring those areas into full compliance. This is in keeping with our ongoing strategic and annual planning and review process. Each faculty member and some staff members will be involved in the compliance certification audit for the SACS Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards. Committees have been set up for review of each standard. In most cases the committees are small and may even consist of one member. Some directions and general guidelines have been developed to assist the committees for completing the audit.

Directions

1. The attached sheet indicates your standard number and the standard itself. Special instructions and suggested resources are also given.
2. General guidelines for all standards and a few examples for the compliance certification audit are included.
3. You will need to complete the Comprehensive Standards Audit Form. You can obtain the form from the RBC-SACS (www.rbc.edu/sacs). You can access the website from the RBC home page. The form is a Word file that you can download to your computer, just like the Faculty Development Report form.
4. You will need to fill in your name(s), standard #, standard, and status (compliance, partial compliance or non-compliance).
5. After you have completed your analysis, complete the form by answering the seven questions, print it and send it to the Provost's Office.
6. The deadline for submission of all audits is Friday, April 15, 2005.

General Guidelines for Committees Compliance Certification Audit

For your topic you are to determine whether Richard Bland College is in full compliance, partial compliance or is in non-compliance. You should begin your analysis by carefully interpreting your assigned standard to understand each aspect of it and what information and data must be assembled to document compliance. You will find some special instructions for each standard on the Comprehensive Standards Review List.

The following are general guidelines for completing the audit, but all may not apply to every standard. (Contact Kay Snavelly or Carole Summerville if you have any questions)

1. A Comprehensive Standards Audit Form has been developed to help you submit your report. You can download the form to your computer (just like the Faculty Development Report form) from the RBC SACS website (www.rbc.edu/sacs). You will be able to access the website from the RBC home page. You will also need to submit the form after completion by sending a printed copy to the Provost's Office.
2. Examples of Compliance Reviews included are taken from the Commission of College's *Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation*.
3. Your topic will most likely consist of several parts. If your standard has numbered guidelines following it, you will need to determine the compliance status for each and fill out a separate form for each.
4. If there is more than one person assigned to a standard, the person designated as chair is responsible for calling the committee together, assigning the workload, and submitting the report.
5. The questions on the form ask you to find published policies, describe procedures, find assessment results, etc.
6. If the special instructions for your standard indicate that the standard you are reviewing includes a Commission policy which must be followed, the policy can be accessed through www.sacscoc.org.
7. According to the SACS document *The Principles of Accreditation*, in every Comprehensive Standard mandating a policy or procedure, the policy or procedure must be
 - a) in writing,
 - b) approved through appropriate institutional processes,

- c) published in appropriate institutional documents accessible to those affected by the policy or procedure, and
 - d) implemented and enforced by the institution.
8. You may need to use a variety of techniques to research your topic including interviews, document searches, raw data, comparisons with data or information in publications or on line from other institutions, etc.
 9. If a policy is currently available online, you will need to provide the link to get to the policy instead of providing a copy of it.
 10. Determine the compliance status of your standard. Answers to questions on the form will need to document whether RBC is in compliance, partial compliance, or non-compliance.
 11. SACS indicates that the evidence supporting compliance must be: “reliable, current, verifiable, coherent, objective, relevant, representative, and drawn from multiple indicators.”
 12. After your review of the policies and procedures at RBC, **make recommendations about what can be done to improve them.**
 13. Write up your report and submit copies to the Provost’s Office.
 14. Observe the deadlines.
 15. You may want to refer to similar ‘must’ statements in the *1996-1998 RBC Self-Study*. If you do not have a copy, there is a stack of them on the filing cabinets in Room 114 Ernst. Please take one.
 16. SACS Commission on Colleges publications, *Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation* and *The Principles of Accreditation* are on reserve in the Library.
 17. If you have questions, please see Kay Snavelly or Carole Summerville.

Example of Compliance of a Comprehensive Standard

The following is an example given in the *SACS Commission on Colleges Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation* to show how to determine the extent of compliance. (See pages 13 – 14)

For standard 3.9.3 that states “The institution provides services supporting its mission with qualified personnel to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its student affairs programs.”

This standard covers four critical issues:

1. The relationship of the student affairs services and programs to the mission of the institution.
2. The qualifications of student affairs services and programs personnel.
3. The quality of student affairs services and programs.
4. The effectiveness of student affairs services and programs.

The necessity for all programs and services to support the institution’s mission, the qualifications of personnel, and the quality and effectiveness of programs and services are issues addressed throughout the Comprehensive Standards.

In order to determine its compliance with the four components of this standard, the institution may wish to consider the following questions, the answers to which require judgments that the institution must make:

1. In what ways do student affairs services and programs support the institution’s mission?
2. What are the appropriate qualifications for personnel who provide the student affairs programs and services that the institution offers?
3. Do student affairs personnel possess these qualifications?
4. If student affairs personnel are supposed to be sufficiently well qualified to assure the quality and effectiveness of the student affairs program, how are the “quality” and “effectiveness” of these services defined?
5. What types of evidence are needed to ascertain the quality and effectiveness of the student affairs programs and services?
6. What methods of assessment are employed to produce this evidence?
7. How are the results of assessment used to improve these programs and services?

This standard is an example of one that is complex and therefore calls for extensive analysis, judgment, multiple assessment modes, and identification of patterns of evidence in order to present a persuasive case for compliance.

Example of Non-Compliance of a Comprehensive Standard

This example is from the *SACS Commission on Colleges Handbook for Reaffirmation of Accreditation* concerning Comprehensive Standard 3.2.14 – Governance and Administration. (See page 51)

Standard 3.2.14

The institution's policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property. This applies to students, faculty, and staff.

The Institution is not in compliance with this requirement because it currently has no written and approved policy regarding ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of any intellectual property by faculty, staff or students.

Action Plan: A policy statement regarding ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property is now being developed, and it will be presented to the Faculty-Staff Council for review and approval at its opening meeting in September 2003. The policy will then be presented to the President for approval, and in turn, presented to the Board of Trustees in October 2003 for its approval. Once the Board has adopted the policy, it will be incorporated in the *Faculty and Staff Handbooks* and will make reference to the fact that the policy also applies to any intellectual property developed by students.