



What Constitutes Evidence?

Will You Know it When You See it?

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HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

Evidence

- *“Something which shows that something else **exists or is true**”*
- *“A visible sign of something”*
- *“Material that is presented to a court of law to help **find the truth** about something.”*

merriam-webster.com



Institutional Quality

*“Institutional accreditation assesses the capacity of an institution to **assure** its own quality and expects it to produce **evidence** that it does so.”*

Higher Learning Commission



Responsibility of the Institution

- *The responsibility for assuring the quality of an institution rests first with the institution itself.*
- *The evidence is to prove the institution meets the **Criteria for Accreditation***



Criteria for Accreditation

Category	Core Components	Sub Components
1	4	11
2	5	7
3	5	21
4	3	14
5	4	15

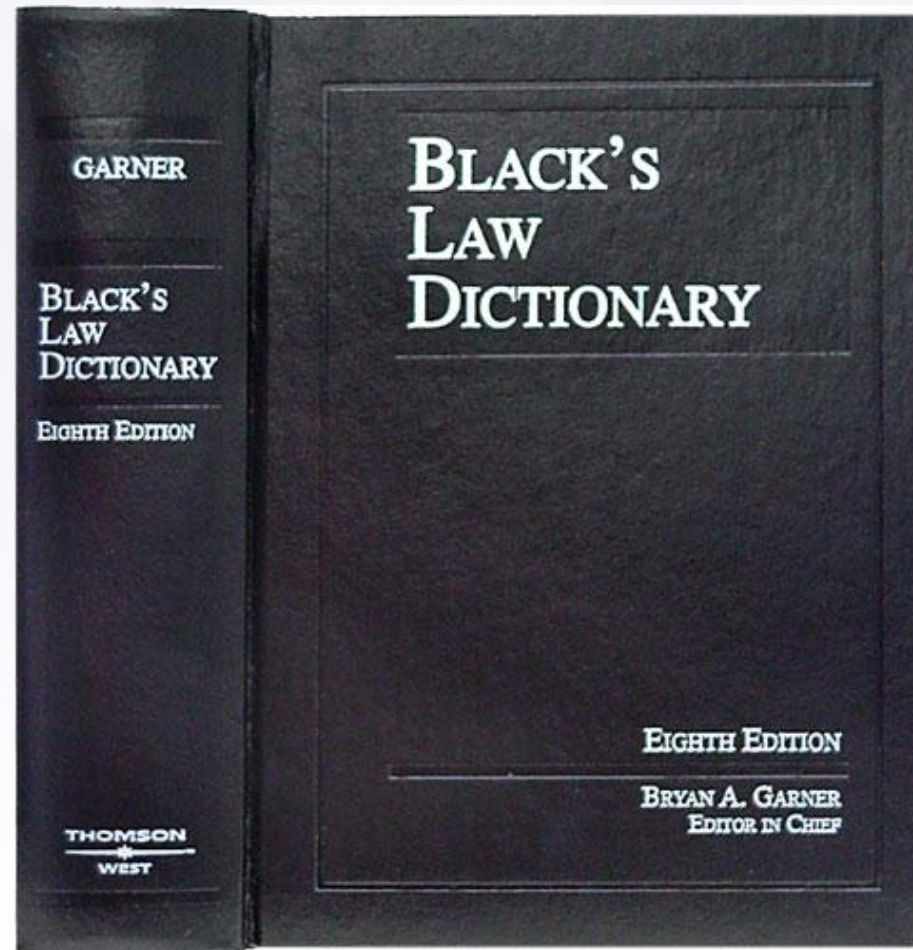


Identify Evidence Relevant Questions

1. What type of documentation might a peer reviewer expect?
2. Where should this documentation be located?
3. What type of information is needed in the documentation?
4. How relevant (age, validity, reliability) or is the evidence?



Our Guide



Hierarchies of Evidence

“Clear Evidence”

Evidence which is positive, precise and explicit, and which tends directly to establish the point to which it is adduced, instead of leaving it a matter of conjecture or presumption.

Example: To prove the University President was duly appointed by the Board, **clear evidence** would be a Board resolution or Board minutes showing a motion to hire said president carried following a vote by the appropriate number of Board members per the Board’s by-laws.



Hierarchies of Evidence

“Corroborating Evidence”

Evidence supplementary to that already given and tending to **strengthen** or **confirm** it; additional evidence of a different character to the same point.

Example: In the same example to prove the University President was duly appointed by the Board, an **offer letter** addressed to the incumbent and signed by the Chair of the Board of Trustees would be corroborating evidence.



Hierarchies of Evidence

“Circumstantial Evidence”

Evidence which inferentially proves the principal fact by establishing a condition of surrounding circumstances, whose existence is a premise from which the existence of the principal fact may be concluded by laws of reasoning. Never sufficient on its own.

Example: Using the same example, a letter addressed to the Chair of the Board, signed by the University President accepting the presidential appointment would be circumstantial evidence.



Peer Review Process

- The following slides show how a peer review team may process evidence.



Consensus on Substance

Teams discuss the Criteria and Core Components:

- Identify all core components related to each particular nexus of facts.
- Strive for consensus on what each core component means, independent of this visit.



Consensus on Substance

Triangulating issues:

- Gathering and comparing evidence on the same point from multiple sources at the institution.
- Different members of the team may have information bearing on the same point.
- Engaging in a discussion and trying to come to a consensus on what does the pattern of evidence demonstrate?



Consensus on Intent

Teams Analyze the Data:

- Once the team is clear on what is known about the institution and what the core components signify, it views the particulars about *this* institution through the lens of the Criteria and Core Components.
- This is the earliest juncture at which teams attempt to identify whether one or more core components are met, met with concerns or not met. Anytime prior to this is premature.



Consensus on Intent

Conclusions (“Team Determinations”):

- The team clearly identifies which Core Components are met, which are met with concerns (if any) and which are not met (if any).
- For this, a shared understanding of the Commission’s rubric is also **essential**.



Consensus on Intent

What these terms mean:

- **“Met”** – the institution is in compliance with the Core Component and has a satisfactory approach or status with respect to this issue.
- Any opportunities for improvement are clearly within the organization’s capacity without any need for Commission intervention or follow-up.
- Teams are encouraged to differentiate **“consultative advice”** from bona fide **“concerns.”**



Consensus on Intent

- **“Met with Concerns”** – the institution is in compliance with the Core Component, but its performance in this area is **less than satisfactory** based on lingering concerns with its approach or results.
- **“Concerns”** indicate improvements **requiring some form of Commission follow-up** to be assured. (e.g. interim reports, focused visits)
- In severe cases, the institution may be **“at risk of non-compliance”** with this Core Component.



Consensus on Intent

- **“Not Met”**– the institution is out of compliance with the Core Component. Its approach or status with respect to this issue, however well-intentioned, is **unsatisfactory**.
- A finding of “not met” on a Core Component constitutes non-compliance, this may indicate problems with related **Assumed Practices**. Generally, teams will examine the institution’s compliance with the related Assumed Practices and contact the liaison if one or more practices are also “not met.”



How the Rubric Works

In order for a Criterion to be met, all its Core Components must also be met.

If a single Core Component is met with concerns, the entire Criterion is also met with concerns.

If a single Core Component is not met, the entire Criterion is also not met.

Team's establish these findings based on evidence institutions present.



(Comprehensive Evaluation) then Judgment

- Why is the evidence meaningful?
- How is the evidence of substantive quality?
- How do you know enough evidence is provided?
- What should the institution do or know as a result of this evidence?



Consequences after Conclusions

- Reviewers are encouraged to avoid reverse engineering conclusions either to ensure, or to avoid, certain consequences.
- The evidence, not the potential consequences, drive peer reviewers' conclusions regarding the institution's performance.
- Reviewers consider the consequences, **but only after** drawing conclusions with the prescribed rubric. This discipline ensures integrity of the Commission's process.



Evidence Review: Portfolio

Core Components (with sub-components noted, if any)	Evidence	Screening Feedback on Core Components
<p>1.A. The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The mission statement is developed through a process suited to the nature and culture of the institution and is adopted by the governing board. 2. The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission. 3. The institution's planning and budgeting priorities align with and support the mission. 	<p>SUMMARY STATEMENT FROM INDIVIDUAL REVIEWER, THEN CONSENSUS STATEMENT FROM TEAM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Strong, Clear, and well presented <input type="checkbox"/> Adequate, but could be improved <input type="checkbox"/> Unclear or incomplete



Alignment of Statement & Rating

Evaluation	Rating
Strong, Clear, and well presented	Core Component is met
Adequate, but could be improved	Core Component is met with concerns
Unclear or incomplete	Core Component is not met

