

# Guide to Additional Assessment Requirements for Graduate Programs

- I. To ensure continued compliance with SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.6.1, the University Assessment Committee implemented **Assessment Plan Guideline #7: Student learning outcomes must show progressive distinction between degree levels (BA, MA, PhD) in the same academic unit.**

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**SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.6.1** The institution's post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, master's and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs. (*Post-baccalaureate program rigor*)

*SACSCOC Resource Manual Rationale and Notes*

Post-baccalaureate degree programs are progressively more complex and rigorous than undergraduate programs and are consistent with the expectation of higher education institutions.

*SACSCOC Resource Manual Relevant Questions for Consideration*

A. What process is used by the institution to clearly define the content and rigor of post-baccalaureate degree programs?

B. What evidence exists that the institution has post-baccalaureate professional degree programs and master's and doctoral programs that are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs?

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Graduate programs are asked to review the [2015 SACSCOC Compliance Certification response](#) to this standard and example SLOs **to ensure this standard is met in every graduate program assessment plan.**

***Progressive Distinction Student Learning Outcomes Example:***

English BA – Students will demonstrate the ability to articulate a clear thesis and fully developed argument

English MA - Students will demonstrate the ability to articulate a clear thesis and fully developed argument that is informed by scholarly research and an appropriate methodology

English PhD - Students will demonstrate the ability to articulate a clear and original thesis and nuanced argument that makes a unique contribution to the field and is informed by scholarly research and an appropriate methodology.

- II. To ensure continued compliance with SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.6.2, the University Assessment Committee implemented **Assessment Plan Guideline #8. Graduate Program Student Learning Outcomes/Measures must demonstrate (1) knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (2) ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences.**

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**SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.6.2** The institution structures its graduate curricula (1) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (2) to ensure ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences. (*Graduate curriculum*)

*SACSCOC Resource Manual Rationale and Notes*

Effective graduate instruction provides the foundational knowledge and skill development to support independent research and professional practice. Graduates have the ability to contribute to a profession or field of study. Although the extent to which students are expected to demonstrate these competencies will vary with the level of the graduate degree, faculty within graduate programs define the skills, knowledge, and competencies required and evaluate the ability of students to engage in independent research and professional practice.

*SACSCOC Resource Manual Relevant Questions for Consideration*

- A. How is the literature of the discipline incorporated into the curriculum requirements?
- B. What evidence exists that the students are engaged in ongoing research or appropriate professional practice and training experiences?

*SACSCOC Resource Manual Required Documentation*

1. Publications containing program requirements
2. Course syllabi

*SACSCOC Resource Manual Examples of Other Types of Documentation*

3. Examples of independent research projects, portfolios, case studies, theses, dissertations, or other examples by graduate students
4. Use of examples in CS 3.3.1.1 {*WEAVE Assessment Reports*} that show student knowledge of literature in the discipline

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Graduate programs are asked to review the [2015 SACSCOC Compliance Certification response](#) to this standard and examples provided below **to ensure this standard is met in every graduate program assessment plan.**

### **Knowledge of the literature of the discipline Examples:**

To meet this part of the standard, programs need to document that students have an awareness of the field. Appropriate measures include article reviews, presentations, annotated bibliographies, review of literature, comprehensive exams, & evidence-based projects.

### **Sample {Knowledge of the Discipline} Student Learning Outcomes:**

- (1) Students will be able to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the body of theory and research that constitutes the foundation for (our discipline).
- (2) Students will be able to demonstrate functional knowledge of the (discipline's) environment.
- (3) Students will articulate and demonstrate (discipline) content and theoretical knowledge in their specialty areas of (discipline) research and study.
- (4) Students will be competent consumers of the (discipline's) research literature. Students will demonstrate the ability to competently read and review published literature.
- (5) Students will critically analyze data and evidence for improving (discipline) and will develop new practice approaches based on the integration of research, theory, and practice knowledge.
- (6) Students will have both broad and specialized knowledge of (the discipline).

### **Sample {Knowledge of the Discipline} Measures:**

- (1) Students will take a comprehensive essay exam after completing required coursework for the master's degree. This exam will contain one or more questions that pertain to the learning outcomes 1-4. The exam will be read by a two-person examination committee and rated on a form containing a specific criterion for knowledge of the field; critical reasoning; ability to understand and conduct research; and, ability to apply and utilize research and theory.
- (2) The (graduate) curriculum requires students to be competent consumers of the research literature. The ability to competently read and review published literature is a necessary component if graduates are to continue to learn and grow their knowledge of the field. This learning of the literature review process will also be useful to students in preparing for the Praxis Exam. Each student will complete an annotated review of the literature in (discipline) as part of the requirements for the Capstone course. The final product shall consist of reviews of no fewer than eight peer-reviewed articles published in professional journals related to a topic in (discipline) that has been approved by the capstone director. Each student is required to write a review of each article in adherence to a

review format designed by the capstone director. One article is reviewed per week during the 10-week summer semester. At the end of the semester, each student combines and summarizes the reviewed articles in the form of an annotated bibliography. This document may also serve as a reference document for the student and their colleagues.

- (3) Students enrolled in (graduate course) work in groups to complete an evidence-based project. Each group chooses a national clinical guideline that has not been reviewed in at least two years. After faculty approval of the guideline topic, the group completes the project in three phases: I) evaluate new evidence through research and compare to current clinical practice guidelines, II) determine how new evidence should be applied to current guidelines, and III) report recommendations. In phase I, students 1) perform a literature review for research relevant to the chosen clinical guideline, 2) critically evaluate research performed since the last guideline update, 3) grade the evidence of recent research studies, and 4) extrapolate new evidence that either validates or conflicts with current practice guidelines.
- (4) The Doctoral Annual Review is conducted annually during the fall semester. All doctoral students and candidates participate and are given formative feedback regarding their professional development. Candidates develop a technology-based presentation which is given to doctoral faculty and fellow doctoral students/candidates. In addition to the curriculum vitae, students/candidates discuss their status in their doctoral program as well as timelines and goals for completion. The presentation must include evidence/artifacts demonstrating pedagogical knowledge and skill development, research and scholarly activity, and leadership and service activities. Ratings on the rubric are superior (4), acceptable (3), emerging (2), and unacceptable (1).

**Ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences** Examples:

To meet this part of the standard, programs need to document that students have engaged in research and/or professional practice. Appropriate measures include research projects, thesis, dissertation, field work, internship, clinicals, colloquiums, conference presentations, and journal articles.

**Sample {Research/Professional Practice} Student Learning Outcomes:**

- (1) Students will demonstrate the ability to carry out original and independent primary and secondary research, use sources effectively to support an argument, and employ appropriate discipline-specific documentation.
- (2) Master's degree candidates demonstrate an understanding of scientific research, its role in building a knowledge base in (discipline), and

demonstrate knowledge about research methods applicable to (discipline) studies and the ability to identify and apply appropriate research methodology to specific problems in (discipline).

- (3) Master's students will learn how to conduct research (discipline) in their chosen emphasis area.

**Sample {Research/Professional Practice} Student Learning Outcomes:**

- (4) Students will gain experience in the practical aspects and skills of (discipline).
- (5) Students will demonstrate a mastery of practical skills necessary for successful (engagement) in their chosen (field).
- (6) Students will have the ability to teach effectively.
- (7) Students will demonstrate skills in (aspects) consistent with entry into the professional practice of (discipline).

**Sample {Research/Professional Practice} Student Learning Outcomes:**

- (8) Students will earn an acceptable score on the Internship Evaluation Instrument in (required course), a supervised internship in a private, state, or federal facility dedicated to (discipline).
- (9) Practicum supervisor evaluations are comprised of written evaluation resulting from practicum instructors' rating on a 5-point scale of students' competencies in the following (discipline)-related domains: (list of domains).
- (10) The Internship Clinical Performance Evaluation is an evaluation of competency based on the (National Organization) Competency Guidelines. The evaluation is an instrument consisting of 10 domains of competency, with a total of 37 items. The evaluation is completed by the intern's clinical preceptor validating the intern's ability to perform satisfactorily in a (discipline) role.
- (11) Students who are GTAs are required to have one semester of XXX 500. This class is designed to prepare students for teaching, and involves several opportunities for observational assessment of teaching to a lesson plan. The student teaching evaluation instrument assesses the students' presentation skills, ability to cover the material in a timely well-paced fashion, and the ability to interact well with student questions.