

Accreditation Toolkits

One of the most common uses of NSSE data is for accreditation. NSSE results can be used in all components of the accreditation process: self-studies, quality improvement initiatives, discussions during visits by the team of peer evaluators, and in response to an accrediting body’s request for improvement or additional evidence of educational effectiveness. NSSE includes measures of quantitative reasoning, effective teaching practices, and learning strategies—providing opportunities to document and consider evidence for quality assurance and improvement. NSSE Accreditation Toolkits include guidelines that suggest ways to map specific items from the questionnaire to accreditation standards, timelines to help institutions decide when and how often to collect student engagement data, and examples of how other institutions in each region have used NSSE in their accreditation efforts. nsse.indiana.edu/support-resources/data-results-guides/accreditation-toolkits/index.html

Toolkit Updates

NSSE Accreditation Toolkits are updated as needed to correspond with revised accreditation standards. Specifically, we aligned the HLC toolkit with the HLC New Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components that went into effect in 2013 for all institutions using both the Standard and Open Pathway options as well as the AQIP process. We also aligned the MSCHE toolkit with the revised standards adopted in 2014, the NEASC toolkit with

the standards adopted in 2016, and the SACSCOC toolkit corresponds with the 2018 edition of the Principles.

Regional Accreditation Toolkits

The following regional toolkits are available:

- Higher Learning Commission (HLC)
- Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)
- New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
- Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)
- Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) Senior College and University Commission

Specialized Accreditation Toolkits

Specialized Accreditation Toolkits provide suggestions for how institutions can incorporate NSSE results into processes that support specialized and professional accreditation. Guidelines map survey items to specific accreditation standards.

Specialized toolkits available:

- ABET: Applied Sciences, Computer Science, Engineering, Engineering Technology, Information Systems
- Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB): Business, Accounting

Sample: NSSE Survey Items Mapped to HLC Accreditation Criteria

NSSE 2019 Survey Items	HLC Core Components
1. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?	
a. Asked questions or contributed to course discussions in other ways	3.B, 3.E
b. Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	3.B, 3.E
c. Come to class without completing readings or assignments	3.E
d. Attended an art exhibit, play, dance, music, theater, or other performance	3.B, 3.E
e. Asked another student to help you understand course material	3.E
f. Explained course material to one or more students	3.B
g. Prepared for exams by discussing or working through course material with other students	3.B, 3.E
h. Worked with other students on course projects or assignments	3.B, 3.E
i. Gave a course presentation	3.B, 3.E
2. During the current school year, about how often have you done the following?	
a. Combined ideas from different courses when completing assignments	3.B, 3.E
b. Connected your learning to societal problems or issues	1.C, 3.B, 3.E
c. Included diverse perspectives (political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc.) in course discussions or assignments	1.C, 3.B, 3.E
d. Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views on a topic or issue	3.B, 3.E
e. Tried to better understand someone else’s views by imagining how an issue looks from his or her perspective	3.B, 3.E
f. Learned something that changed the way you understand an issue or concept	3.B, 3.E
g. Connected ideas from your courses to your prior experiences and knowledge	3.B, 3.E

Institutional Examples

Because NSSE focuses on the quality of student learning and effective educational practices, colleges and universities have found productive ways to incorporate survey results in their institutional self-studies. In the following section, we describe how selected institutions use NSSE in accreditation.

Regional Accreditation

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

Kennesaw State University

Kennesaw State University's Quality Enhancement Plan for SACSCOC contains ten goals with related action plans and strategies for assessing progress. For example, analyses of three NSSE administrations indicated that KSU students did not report desired levels of exposure to diversity, participation in study abroad, and taking a foreign language to support KSU's global learning goals. Goals 1–9 of the plan concentrate on strengthening leadership, financial, and infrastructure commitments global learning and to enhancing student success programs. The action plan for Goal 10, "Campus-wide Engagement in Global Learning Will Increase Greatly," focuses on assessing the summative impact of Goals 1–9 and includes biennial participation in NSSE. Survey responses of KSU seniors will be used for trend analysis and to show gains in targeted areas.

Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE)

New Jersey Institute of Technology

As described in its self-study, the New Jersey Institute of Technology (NJIT) is "an assessment-based university in terms of educational effectiveness." The development of its Strategic Plan 2012–2015 coincided with the institution's ten-year bid for reaffirmation of accreditation and brought assessment efforts under a unified framework. To support MSCHE Standard 14, Assessment of Student Learning, NJIT highlighted results from participation in NSSE's Consortium for the Study of Writing in College as evidence of strong competence in a variety of writing measures and used first-year student results from 2008 and 2010 NSSE administrations related to classroom presentations, collaborating on projects, tutoring other students, diversity experiences, and development of ethical values.

Higher Learning Commission (HLC)

University of Denver

In support of Standard 3.A.3 for its self-study for HLC, the University of Denver (DU) assesses student learning at multiple levels using multiple methods that include

NSSE, BCSSE, and student satisfaction surveys. Multi-year analyses of benchmark scores were reviewed by the chancellor, provost, and other senior administrators. Institutional research staff also explored student responses in focus groups, in particular, for the possible effect from the distributed nature of DU's administrative services in lower scores on the Supportive Campus Environment benchmark than peers and comparison groups. This led to creation of the Center for Academic and Career Development, a "one-stop" service model.

Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)

California State University San Marcos

NSSE data have played an important role in the accreditation process at California State University San Marcos (CSUSM), providing evidence of achievements in its Undergraduate Learning Outcomes (ULOs) mapped to WASC standards. NSSE results indicated San Marcos students were more likely than those at other Cal State institutions to engage in higher-order learning behaviors and the institution used this information to show how their students had developed as Comprehensive and Critical Thinkers. For the Skilled Communicators ULO, CSUSM used NSSE data to document the high frequency of student presentations in class and students crediting their university experience for the development of oral communication skills.

Specialized Accreditation

ABET

The Catholic University of America

The School of Engineering (SOE) at The Catholic University of America (CUA) adopted a unified assessment process for all of its departments. Reports of program outcomes that align with ABET guidelines are issued annually. Since 2007, select NSSE data have been used in assessment of engineering programs as well as CUA's general education goals. SOE seniors are compared with all CUA seniors as well as with Carnegie peers in respect to 11 learning objectives. Specifically, CUA studied results for SOE seniors on NSSE items related to oral and written communication, critical thinking and reasoned analysis, quantitative reasoning, ability to find and critically evaluate information using resources and technology, and experiences with diversity. These data have led to curricular changes focused on continuous improvement.