4.A - Core Component 4.A

The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs.

1. The institution maintains a practice of regular program reviews.
2. The institution evaluates all the credit that it transcripts, including what it awards for experiential learning or other forms of prior learning, or relies on the evaluation of responsible third parties.
3. The institution has policies that assure the quality of the credit it accepts in transfer.
4. The institution maintains and exercises authority over the prerequisites for courses, rigor of courses, expectations for student learning, access to learning resources, and faculty qualifications for all its programs, including dual credit programs. It assures that its dual credit courses or programs for high school students are equivalent in learning outcomes and levels of achievement to its higher education curriculum.
5. The institution maintains specialized accreditation for its programs as appropriate to its educational purposes.
6. The institution evaluates the success of its graduates. The institution assures that the degree or certificate programs it represents as preparation for advanced study or employment accomplish these purposes. For all programs, the institution looks to indicators it deems appropriate to its mission, such as employment rates, admission rates to advanced degree programs, and participation rates in fellowships, internships, and special programs (e.g., Peace Corps and Americorps).

Argument

CWRU's policies and practices demonstrate that the university is fully responsible for its academic programs. The university routinely seeks to improve the quality of these programs and the student experience.

1. CWRU maintains the high quality of its educational programs through a process of regular review, evaluation, and modifications when warranted. The establishment of new academic programs requires reviews and approvals at multiple levels, through the Faculty Senate and to the CWRU Board of Trustees, as summarized on the program approval matrix. These reviews include consideration of the consistency of the new program with CWRU's mission and strategic vision, and the availability of human, physical, and financial resources to deliver the new program without detrimentally affecting the delivery of existing programs.

Degree programs throughout the university are reviewed on a regular basis. Since the constituent faculties of the eight schools are primarily responsible for delivering the academic programs, these reviews are often undertaken within the schools. The bylaws for the constituent faculties establish the processes by which the reviews occur. For example, the School of Medicine bylaws require a periodic review of its academic departments (including its academic programs) and specify a minimum frequency for the review. The College of Arts and Sciences bylaws assign responsibility for a periodic review of academic programs to its Committee on Educational programs. In the other schools, curriculum committees are charged annually to consider different aspects of the academic programs. (See examples from the School of Engineering, the School of Nursing, and the School of Applied Social Sciences.) Also, the bylaws of the School of Dental Medicine require an annual review and report on its clinical services, in which predoctoral dental students gain practical
experience.

The SAGES program forms the core of the university's general education requirement for all undergraduates, and thus is governed and reviewed at a more central level through a Faculty Senate process. Note that an annual report on the SAGES program is to be reviewed by the Curriculum Subcommittee of the Committee on Undergraduate Education. The SAGES program also receives a more in-depth review on a periodic basis. One such review culminated in 2011, and another review (scheduled for 2015) is called for in CWRU's current strategic plan.

At the highest level, the Academic Affairs and Student Life (AASL) Committee of the Board of Trustees (see III.6 of the bylaws) evaluates and oversees the implementation of the University’s academic programs. The AASL committee receives overview presentations from the schools on a regular cycle and provides feedback on the academic and research programs.

The School of Graduate Studies conducts regular program reviews based on the Ohio Board of Regents’ Advisory Committee on Graduate Study’s guidelines, which address seven quality standards regarding program faculty, graduates, vitality, demand, interactions, access, and assessment. Professional schools engage in a regular cycle of program review as part of meeting their disciplinary accreditation standards. Examples are provided from the schools of Dental Medicine, Engineering, Medicine, and Nursing. Undergraduate programs that do not fall under disciplinary accreditation are commonly reviewed as part of strategic planning and program revision processes (see, e.g., the processes used by the College of Arts and Sciences and the metrics established by School of Engineering).

CWRU engages multiple visiting committees to provide external feedback on its educational programs. These committees may operate at the university level, or within individual schools (see examples from the School of Law and the Weatherhead School of Management). In addition, various programs (see examples for the Master of Laws and the Masters of Engineering and Management programs) and centers (e.g., International Affairs, the Inamori Center for Ethics, and the Great Lakes Energy Institute) utilize visiting or advisory committees to provide external feedback.

2. University policy which defines the content and work expectations in order to earn academic credits for courses taught in traditional or non-traditional formats is used as the basis for evaluating potential transfer credit. The assignment of specific credit-hours to a course occurs through a formal review process conducted at the appropriate levels of faculty governance.

For undergraduate students, transfer credit policies are posted online and appear in the General Bulletin. The university also has policies in place for the undergraduate credit granted for Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate exams, as well as departmental proficiency exams. These too are posted online and appear in the General Bulletin. CWRU also has processes in place for evaluating credits earned by high-school students through Post-Secondary Educational Option programs. Transfer policies for the graduate and professional programs are posted throughout the General Bulletin as well as on various program website.

Policies and structures are also in place to evaluate experiential learning outside of the classroom that leads to the awarding of credit toward completion of a CWRU degree. See examples from the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences regarding credits earned through field-work placements in which learning contracts are prepared, or the School of Medicine process for evaluating external clinical experiences.

3. Undergraduate transfer credit is evaluated by staff in the Office of Undergraduate Studies in
consultation with the appropriate academic department, in accordance with university policy.

The School of Graduate Studies enforces its policy on transfer credits for students in the graduate programs. This policy indicates that the transferred credit must be deemed appropriate for the student’s planned program of study and describes the process for gaining approval from the student’s advisor, department chair or committee, and the dean of graduate studies.

Professional schools have additional policies to indicate the standards for the work they will accept, and these are enforced at the school level. See the example policies for the schools of Dental Medicine, Management, and Applied Social Sciences as presented in the CWRU General Bulletin. In other cases, information about transfer policies is provided as part of the admissions process. See the examples from the School of Law and the Doctor of Nursing Practice program.

4. The rigor, expectations for learning, and access to learning resources are all determined by the faculty members proposing courses. Standards are upheld through reviews with departmental curriculum committees, department chairs, and curriculum committees in the schools. Subsequent oversight is provided by Faculty Senate committees, such as the Committee on Graduate Studies, the Committee on Undergraduate Education (FSCUE), and its Curriculum Subcommittee.

Faculty members set the prerequisites for their courses which are included with course descriptions listed throughout the CWRU General Bulletin. Prerequisites and expected background preparation can be listed in two ways. The notation "Recommended preparation" is intended to advise students about the background useful for the course, while those courses listed as "Prerequisites" are enforced by CWRU's Student Information System during registration. (See for example, the Bulletin listing for French 319). The Student Information System (SIS) prevents students from enrolling in classes for which the pre-requisites have not been met. The system also provides a message to the student indicating the reason they are not able to enroll. Students have the option to request permission to enter the course, and the request is reviewed by the instructor or departmental representative.

The Faculty Handbook provides an overview of the standards that university faculty should meet, including expert knowledge of his or her academic field, a dedication to effective teaching, and a commitment to a continuing program of research or other advanced creative activity. The Committee on Faculty Personnel of the Faculty Senate reviews faculty personnel policies and procedures in the schools, including those having to do with appointment, promotion, and tenure.

As presented in the Assurance Argument for core component 3.C, CWRU ensures that all faculty members are appropriately qualified for their positions, that faculty members are evaluated regularly in accordance with established institutional policies and procedures, and that resources are available for assuring that instructors are current in their disciplines and adept in their teaching roles.

The university has no external restrictions on access to its learning resources for students.

CWRU does not participate in dual-credit programs for high-school students. In order for a course taken prior to the student’s graduation from high school to be considered eligible for transfer credit at CWRU, that course must be listed in the college’s catalog among courses offered for degree credit to the college’s undergraduates, taken in the company of matriculated college students, and organized and taught by college faculty. (See the undergraduate transfer-credit policy.)

5. CWRU seeks and maintains specialized accreditation for many of its degrees and certificate programs with a number of nationally recognized professional associations. None of these programs is in jeopardy of losing a favorable accreditation status, and no programs at CWRU have lost
accredited status during the current HLC accreditation cycle (or within memory). In addition, CWRU has never chosen to forgo seeking specialized accreditation for any of its academic programs that are eligible for such accreditation. In addition, the university would pursue specialized accreditation for new programs that would be eligible for such accreditation.

6. The university evaluates the success of its graduates in various ways. An annual First Destination Survey of graduating seniors is administered to ask about post-graduation plans, including questions about the impact experiential learning had on these plans. This report contains detailed information about the success of CWRU undergraduates in gaining employment or entry to graduate and professional programs. The graduate program review process (mandated by the Ohio Board of Regents) requires data on employment of graduate students within three to five years in a field consistent with the mission of the program.

Individual schools (see examples from the School of Engineering, the School of Law, and the College of Arts and Sciences) also track the success and career placements of graduates. Many programs, such as Anthropology, English, Nutrition, and Psychology, do likewise. Analyses of these data inform the university about how to adjust the academic programs to maintain high quality.

Appendix H of the Federal Compliance report provides additional information about how CWRU tracks the success of its graduates.

Sources

- Academic policies on Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, and Proficiency Credit
- Advisory Board, Great Lakes Energy Institute - overview and membership list from website
- Bylaws - Bolton School of Nursing (rev. 1/14)
- Bylaws - Bolton School of Nursing (rev. 1/14) (page number 9)
- Bylaws - Case School of Engineering (rev. 4/21/11)
- Bylaws - Case School of Engineering (rev. 4/21/11) (page number 9)
- Bylaws - College of Arts and Sciences (rev. 3/20/13)
- Bylaws - College of Arts and Sciences (rev. 3/20/13) (page number 11)
- Bylaws - Faculty Senate (rev. 3/14)
- Bylaws - Faculty Senate (rev. 3/14) (page number 11)
- Bylaws - Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (rev. 3/20/13)
- Bylaws - Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences (rev. 3/20/13) (page number 8)
- Bylaws - School of Dental Medicine (rev. 9/20/07)
- Bylaws - School of Dental Medicine (rev. 9/20/07) (page number 25)
- Bylaws - School of Law (rev. 10/1/07)
- Bylaws - School of Law (rev. 10/1/07) (page number 9)
- Bylaws - School of Medicine (rev. 2/22/12)
- Bylaws - School of Medicine (rev. 2/22/12) (page number 19)
- Charge to Curriculum subcommittee of the Faculty Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education (FSCUE)
- Charge to Faculty Senate Committee on Graduate Studies
- Charge to Faculty Senate Committee on Undergraduate Education
- College Credit Evaluation Form - for college courses taken while in high school
- Corporate Visiting Committee - overview from website
- Definition of a Credit Hour - approved by Faculty Senate
- Description and list of members of the Corporate Advisory Board for the Master of Engineering and Management program
- Description of responsibilities of the Graduate Studies committee, School of Dental Medicine
- Description of the faculty governance process for SAGES - from website
- Description of the Program Evaluation and Assessment Committee, School of Medicine (April, 2014)
- Doctor of Nursing Practice program - transfer credit policy
- Faculty Handbook (2014)
- Faculty Handbook (2014) (page number 34)
- Federal Compliance Report - Appendix H - Student Outcomes Data
- Federal Compliance Report - Appendix H - Student Outcomes Data (page number 36)
- First Destination Survey report (2014)
- First Destination Survey report (2014) (page number 5)
- First Destination Survey report (2014) (page number 8)
- Information on permission requests, Student Information System
- Law student transfer process - description from website
- List of accredited programs with dates and details (March 2015)
- List of members of the Advisory Board for the Inamori Center for Ethics and Excellence
- List of members of the Advisory Board for the Master of Laws program
- Listing and biographical information for the staff, Office of Undergraduate Studies
- Listing and biographical information for the staff, Office of Undergraduate Studies (page number 13)
- Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences learning contract for field work
- Ohio Board of Regents Advisory Committee on Graduate Study (RACGS) guidelines for program approval (2013)
- Ohio Board of Regents Advisory Committee on Graduate Study (RACGS) guidelines for program approval (2013) (page number 26)
- Overview of external assessment practices, Case School of Engineering - from website
- Placement statistics for graduates of the School of Law (2013)
- Plan for program evaluation, Case School of Engineering - from ABET accreditation report
- Policies on transfer credit - from Undergraduate Studies website
- Program approval matrix - showing requirements for internal and external levels of approval
- Program evaluation plan, School of Nursing
- Regulations and Bylaws - Board of Trustees
- Regulations and Bylaws - Board of Trustees (page number 9)
- SAGES program overview - from website
- SAGES Review Committee final report (2011)
- School of Applied Social Sciences Field Education Manual (2013-14)
- School of Medicine external experience process - description from website
- Story of alumni in the Peace Corps - from College of Arts and Sciences magazine (Winter
2014)
- Strategic Plan - Case School of Engineering (2014)
- Strategic Plan - Case School of Engineering (2014) (page number 7)
- Strategic Plan - College of Arts and Sciences (2014)
- Strategic Plan - College of Arts and Sciences (2014) (page number 6)
- Tracking information for graduates of the English programs - from website
- Tracking report for graduates of the Anthropology programs - from website
- Tracking report for graduates of the Psychology programs - from website
- Tracking report on internship placement, MS in Public Health Nutrition program
- Tracking report on PhD graduates of the Organizational Behavior program, Weatherhead School of Management
- University Strategic Plan for 2013-2018
- University Strategic Plan for 2013-2018 (page number 13)
- Visiting Committee, International Affairs - overview and membership list from website
- Visiting Committee, School of Law - membership list from website
- Visiting Committee, Weatherhead School of Management - membership listing from website