Outcomes-Focused, Differentiated Accreditation

The Current U.S. Context and A Possible Framework for Policy and Practice Reform

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So where is the US now?
Basic US quality assurance structure

In theory, relationships look like this. In reality, they are more complex and overlapping.

Federal government
- Sets standards for accreditor recognition
- Requires institutions to be accredited

Accrediting Agencies
- Create standards to align with federal requirements and membership interests

Institutions
- Submit self-study reports and participate in peer review with accreditor
Balancing several US interests

- Focus on student outcomes
- Add transparency and uniformity to processes
- Reduce regulatory burdens
- Differentiate accreditor engagement with institutions
- Align government processes
Vision for Outcomes-Focused, Differentiated Accreditation

What would the process look like?

1. Outcomes-focused risk assessment

2. Categories for institutions

3. Differentiated responses based on flags

Federal legislation and regulation should set some ground rules (discussed in detail later), but are not needed to govern all parts of the system.

Learning outcomes can be an essential part of this analysis.

Continuous improvement

Peer review focused on flags in risk assessment

Deep engagement working toward significant improvement

High confidence

Medium confidence

Low confidence

Learning outcomes can be an essential part of this analysis.
Possible Measures for Outcomes-Focused Risk Assessment

* If available

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<th>Student outcomes</th>
<th>Regulatory history and standing</th>
<th>Other possible risk factors</th>
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<td><strong>Absolute values and changes over time</strong></td>
<td><strong>Accreditation history</strong></td>
<td>• Enrollment changes.</td>
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<td>• Graduation rates</td>
<td>• Federal compliance</td>
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<td>• Retention rate</td>
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<td>• Gainful employment*</td>
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Pathways for Implementation

There are pros, cons, and uncertainties for each - and all overlap to some degree.

Significant Congressional action on the Higher Education Act

Some regulatory change with no Congressional action

No significant federal change, but accreditors implement frameworks of their own

Jerry Falwell Jr. Says He Will Lead Federal Task Force on Higher-Ed Policy
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