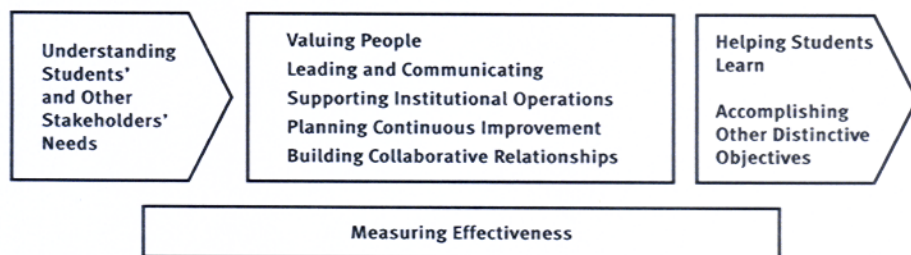




# The AQIP Criteria and the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation

## Systems Thinking in the Process-Focused Organization

AQIP is characterized by its concentration on systems and processes both as the basis for quality assurance and as leverage for institutional improvement. To ensure that its participant organizations maintain this process focus, AQIP created nine criteria that pose challenging questions about groups of related processes. Although the AQIP Criteria examine an organization from a perspective different from the lens used in the Commission's Criteria for Accreditation, they ultimately permit an institution to create a body of evidence that will allow easy proof that it fulfills the Commission's Criteria. The figure below shows how the nine AQIP Criteria together describe the interrelationships among systems essential to any effective college or university, using *quality* to refer to the never-ending improvement of systems and processes in support of mission.



AQIP insists that every organization be lucid and direct about what it is trying to accomplish, and clear about identifying those for whom it is expending its energies and capital. To do this effectively, every organization needs a system that can precisely decipher the shifting needs of its target students and stakeholders. At the left of the figure, *Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs* examines this system, which reestablishes the basis for accountability by determining the requirements, expectations, and preferences of stakeholders. Knowing the needs it chooses to serve delineates a higher education organization's mission and vision. In turn, this understanding drives the design and operation of the other systems and processes an organization establishes to carry out its mission.

On the figure's right end, *Helping Students Learn* highlights the core processes—such as instructional design and delivery—that contribute directly to student learning, an educational organization's primary purpose and achievement. *Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives* provides for diversity in the character of higher education organizations by encompassing the variety of processes that organizations administer to pursue additional critical goals, such as research, development of endowment funds, competitive athletics, and service to specific communities. Together, these two criteria examine the key processes that a college or university employs to create value directly for its students and other stakeholders. In the eyes of the people an organization serves, the processes included in these systems are the apparent reasons it exists. They are where an organization touches and affects the lives of its stakeholders.

► **See Section 6.4**  
for the complete  
AQIP Criteria questions.

Here are the groups of  
processes they focus on:

1. Helping Students Learn
2. Accomplishing Other Distinctive Objectives
3. Understanding Students' and Other Stakeholders' Needs
4. Valuing People
5. Leading and Communicating
6. Supporting Institutional Operations
7. Measuring Effectiveness
8. Planning Continuous Improvement
9. Building Collaborative Relationships



The Commission's Criteria for Accreditation	AQIP Criteria								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Criterion One: Mission and Integrity.</b> The organization operates with integrity to ensure the fulfillment of its mission through structures and processes that involve the board, administration, faculty, staff, and students.	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓
<b>Criterion Two: Preparing for the Future.</b> The organization's allocation of resources and its processes for evaluation and planning demonstrate its capacity to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its education, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.				✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Criterion Three: Student Learning and Effective Teaching.</b> The organization provides evidence of student learning and teaching effectiveness that demonstrates it is fulfilling its educational mission.	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		
<b>Criterion Four: Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge.</b> The organization promotes a life of learning for its faculty, administration, staff, and students by fostering and supporting inquiry, creativity, practice, and social responsibility in ways consistent with its mission.	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			
<b>Criterion Five: Engagement and Service.</b> As called for by its mission, the organization identifies its constituencies and serves them in ways both value.		✓		✓	✓		✓		✓