

2014 Periodic Review Report Outcomes: A Snapshot

By Don Sutherland

If the just-released Periodic Review Report (PRR) outcomes could be summarized in two themes, those themes would likely be the increased emphasis on Standard 3 (Institutional Resources) and the continuing focus on Standard 14 (Assessment of Student Learning). Standard 3 was cited in 32% of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's (MSCHE) requests for follow-up reports, which fell barely below the 36% figure from the "Financial Crisis" PRR cycle of 2008. For the first time, Standard 3 was the second most cited issue in such requests. At the same time, Standard 14 was cited in 76% of follow-up requests, also the second highest percentage since 2008. Standard 14 has consistently been the most frequently cited MSCHE Standard in follow-up requests arising from both the Self-Study Report and Periodic Review Report with the exception of the 2013 cycle when Standard 7 was cited somewhat more frequently in Self-Study-related follow-up requests.

During the 2014 cycle, 54% of PRR reports resulted in follow-up requests. That figure is little changed from the 5-year moving average (55%) and 3-year moving average (56%). It should be noted that a few institutions that submitted Self-Study Reports in 2009 had their PRRs delayed until 2015. CUNY schools fared somewhat better with 40% receiving requests for a follow-up report.

Schools receiving follow-up requests were cited for an average of 1.9 MSCHE standards per request. That was somewhat lower than the 5-year moving average (2.3 standards per follow-up request) and 3-year moving average (2.3 standards per follow-up request).

The 2014 PRR cycle saw MSCHE issue citations for 8 of its 14 standards. The below table shows the percentage of times a given MSCHE standard was cited in follow-up requests arising from the PRR.

MSCHE Standards Cited (% of Follow-Up Requests):

MSCHE Standard	2014 Cycle	3-Year Average	5-Year Average
Standard 2: Planning, Resource Allocation, Institutional Renewal	12%	25%	28%
Standard 3: Institutional Resources	32%	23%	22%
Standard 4: Leadership and Governance	4%	11%	10%
Standard 7: Institutional Assessment	28%	37%	42%
Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention	16%	15%	14%
Standard 12: General Education	12%	15%	18%
Standard 13: Related Educational Activities	12%	9%	9%
Standard 14: Assessment of Student Learning	76%	75%	73%

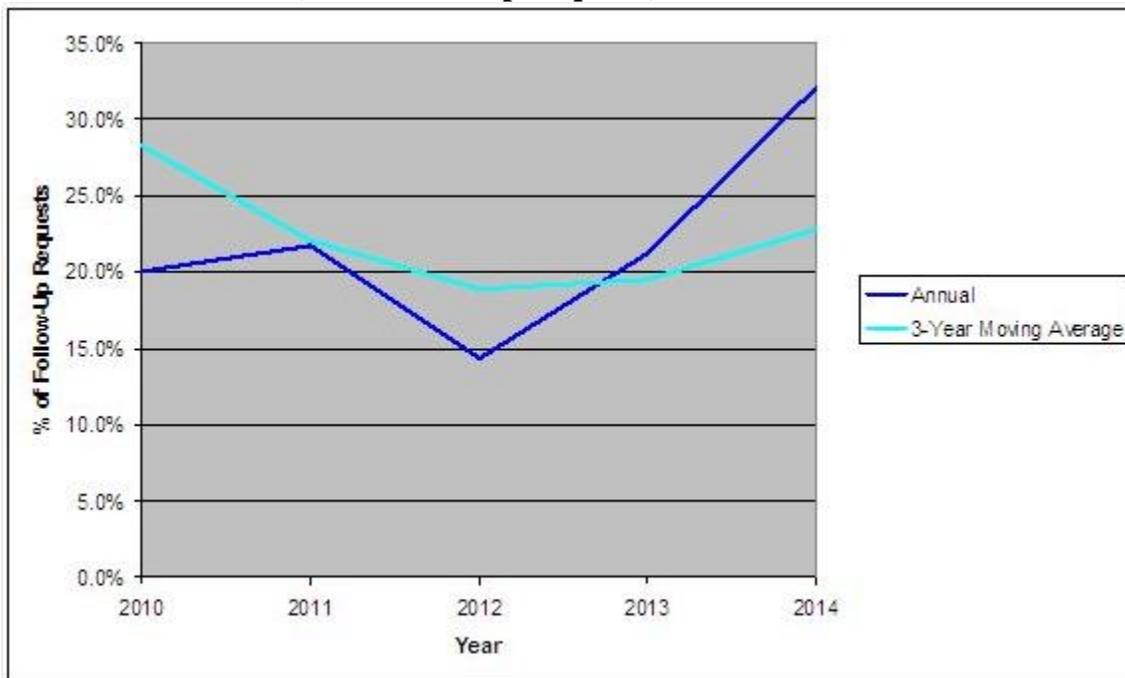
The five most frequently cited standards were as follows:

Most Frequently Cited MSCHE Standards in Follow-Up Requests:

Rank	2014 Cycle	3-Year Average	5-Year Average
1.	Standard 14	Standard 14	Standard 14
2.	Standard 3	Standard 7	Standard 7
3.	Standard 7	Standard 2	Standard 2
4.	Standard 8	Standard 3	Standard 3
5.	Standards 2, 12, 13	Standards 8, 12	Standard 12

Considering the large increase in Standard 3 citations, a closer look is in order. Unlike the 2008-10 timeframe that included a financial crisis, deep recession, and the aftermath of those financial and macroeconomic events, the current increase has occurred during a period of ongoing economic growth.

Standard 3 Citations (% of Follow-Up Requests):



The detailed reasons behind the citations were as follows:

- The need to develop/further develop strategies to measure and assess the level of, and efficient utilization of, institutional resources required to support the institution’s mission and goals (63% of the Standard 3 citations).
- Planning and resource allocation processes reflect conclusions drawn from assessment results, and include benchmarks for goal achievement, and provide for appropriate constituent participation (13% of the Standard 3 citations). Put another way, assessment results are used to inform the budgeting and resource allocation process.
- The need to develop/further develop a financial planning and budgeting process aligned with the institution’s mission, goals, and [strategic] plan that provides for an annual budget and multi-year budget projections, both institution-wide and among departments (13% of the Standard 3 citations).

- Efforts to strengthen the institution’s short- and long-term financial viability (13% of the Standard 3 citations).

Each of these areas could allow for an insightful research question when it comes to the Self-Study process. By the 2019 Self-Study process, these research questions would concern [Standard VI](#) (Planning, Resources, and Institutional Improvement), which has incorporated existing Standard 2 (Planning, Resource Allocation, Institutional Renewal) and Standard 3 (Institutional Resources).

Special focus institutions continued to draw the highest percentage of follow-up requests. In 2014, special focus schools saw follow-up requests from 71% of their Periodic Review Reports. That is somewhat above the 5-year moving average (66%) and 3-year moving average (67%) for those schools. Assessment-related issues (Standard 7 and/or Standard 14) have played the largest role in that outcome. Eliminating assessment-related issues would also have eliminated the gap between special focus institutions and all other institutions when it comes to Periodic Review Report outcomes during the 2010-2014 timeframe. Put another way, sustained and robust assessment infrastructure and efforts can lead to better accreditation outcomes.

PRR Outcomes for Special Focus Institutions and Assessment Issues (2010-2014):

Category	Special Focus	All Other
Periodic Review Reports with Follow-Up Requests	66%	52%
Follow-Up Requests for Standard 7, 14, or Both	89%	78%
Standard 7 and 14 Citations as a Share of All Citations	51%	34%
Periodic Review Reports with Follow-Up Requests had there been No Standard 7 and/or 14 Issues	45%	47%

Finally, the biggest turnaround from the 2009 Self-Study Report to the 2014 Periodic Review Report was achieved by Trocaire College in Buffalo, New York. Trocaire College received a follow-up request covering six MSCHE standards subsequent to its Self-Study submission. Five years later, the College received no follow-up requests from its Periodic Review Report. Therefore, if one is looking for a case study in which big turnarounds in compliance with accreditation requirements are possible, Trocaire College offers one such example.