Accreditation: Through the Lens of Assessors

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ABSTRACT

Academic accreditation continues to be the "buzzword" and beacon of assuring the quality of the educational offers of HEIs, colleges, or programs in most countries. A greater part of the accreditation is in both audits, which is compliance and assessment that determines how well the entity has performed, all based on widely-accepted rubrics of continuous improvements. The success of accreditation runs from the poorly performing to the highest performing bands on the performance spectrum. Assessee is always asking a simple question of "what to expect" from the assessors. This paper aims to demystify the assessors' myth by probing into the assessors' mindset of their expectations and what and how they normally approach the performance assessment process underscoring the accreditation. While there are no fixed or best answers, there is a common thread of which most assessors use. This common thread is the use of the most basic and widely used Deming Cycle rubrics of PDCA (Plan, Do Check, and Act) of "Closing the Loop". For Performance Excellence, the main rubric is to audit and assess the performance using the evaluative factors of ADLI (Approach, Deployment, Learning, Integration) for Process Criteria and LeTCI (Level, Trend, Comparison, Integration) for Results Criteria. These evaluative factors are used as the assessment guidelines of what and how the entity has performed, meaning the process efficiencies and results effectiveness, concerning their mission, goals, or measurable objectives. The performance assessment is based on what (the processes) and how well (the results) the entity is doing to meet or go beyond the standards criteria (the accreditation standards) to accomplish the mission, goals, and objectives (the term of reference). The performance of the educational value comes from the intersection of the Criteria, Self-Study content, and the Term of Reference.

Keywords: accreditation, performance assessment, mindset of assessor, performance excellence

Accreditation and Assessment

CHEA's (Council for Higher education Accreditation) with 7 regional accreditation bodies under its wings having accredited 3,509 HEIs (CHEA, 2017) defines "Accreditation as the review of the quality of higher education HEIs and programs" (CHEA, 2019). As noted by the SR Education Group (Colleges & Degrees, 2019), "Accreditation as a status shows the public that a school has met and is maintaining a high level of standards set by an accrediting agency". Accreditation governance of the accreditation agencies in the US is under the U.S. Department of Education (USDE, 2019), or under the Ministry of Education or special public organization under the sponsorship of governments in most developing countries. The U.S. Department of Education describes the practice of accreditation as "a means of conducting nongovernmental, peer evaluation of educational HEIs and programs" (USDE, 2019). It provides key services and Information on Accredited HEIs, Accreditor Recognition Criteria and processes, Information on Recognized Accreditors, and Recommendations on Improving Accreditation. Regional accreditation and specialized/program accreditation remain the primary drivers for assessment work at colleges and universities across all regions. The 2013 NILOA (National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment) Survey suggests that there is an increasing impetus for assessment as being driven by internal needs. This includes the use of assessment evidence to support program reviews, modify curricula, revise learning goals, and otherwise improve educational processes and effectiveness. It also identified certain drivers of assessment practice that have increased in relative importance over time like governing board and presidential mandates, statewide or coordinating board mandates, and faculty or staff interest in improving student learning (Gannon-Slater, 2014).

Basic accreditation principles hold all HEIs to have a clearly defined mission that aims to better educate and serve the students by demonstrating that the entity has the resources to achieve its mission while showing evidence of the mission being achieved. HEIs (Higher Education HEIs) have realized the importance of making the mission statement a "living statement". This means that when the mission is formulated and used strategically, it becomes is a powerful tool that communicates the HEI's fundamental principles, actualities, and truth of its actions to internal and external stakeholders. As such, the mission statement has become a driving force and beacon of the HEI and a yardstick for measuring its accomplishments and achievements **(**Lusthaus, et.al., 1995**).** This guides the goal or purpose of accreditation as "ensuring and assuring" that HEIs of higher education meets acceptable levels of quality (Hegji, 2017) as:

1. Assessing the quality of academic programs at HEIs of higher education, colleges, or programs based on established and tested sets of Standards or Criteria guiding the assessment and/or for professional certification and licensure and for upgrading courses offering such preparation.
2. Creating a culture of continuous improvement of academic quality at colleges and HEIs by stimulating a general raising of standards among educational HEIs through the involvement of faculty and staff comprehensively in HEIal evaluation and planning.

Accreditation is the national or international certification of an HEI or college or program that meets the minimum requirements of the established set of standards assuring that the program meets the needs of quality education based on a set of missions and goals of the entity. Accreditation forms the external perspective of EQA (External Quality Assurance), whichever definition holds in the literature, it is ultimately the certification of "Fit for Purpose". The purpose is the "mission and goals" that define who the HEI is, what they do and what they are capable of delivering, the rallying beacon which all assessors use as the starting point during the assessment. The requirements of the EQA inherently mean that the IQA (Internal Quality Assurance) key processes and results should create on the value-added educational deliveries. This ultimately means the "balancing of the EQA = IQA)" whereby the EQA and IQA are conjoined Siamese Twins, technically meaning that the EQA will be only as good as the EQA Teay (2009).

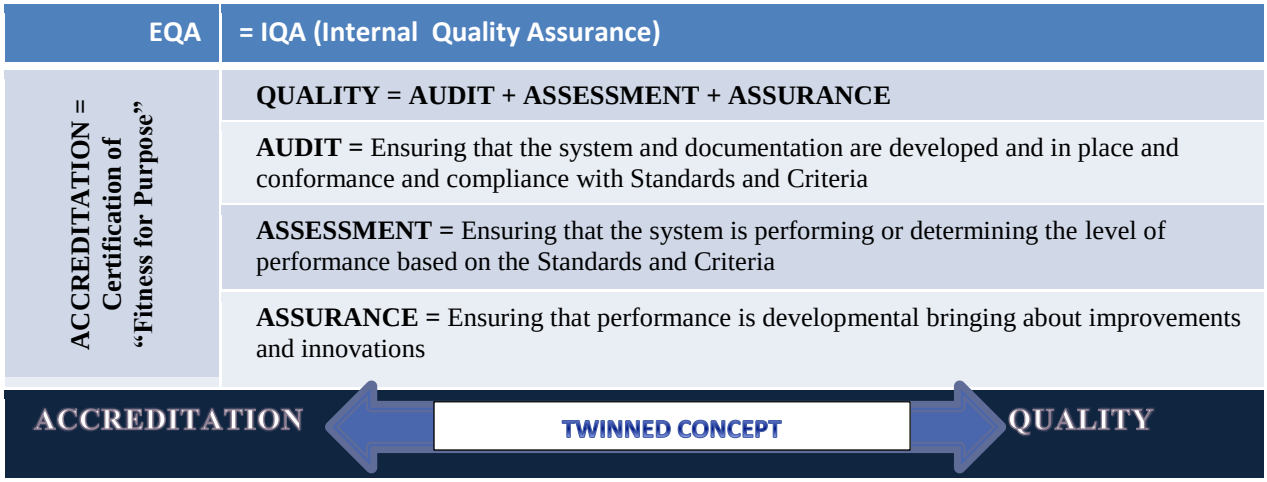


Figure 1: Balancing the EQA = IQA Equation

Source: Adapted from Teay, S., (2009), Balancing the IQA = EQA Equation, Journal of Institutional Research South East Asia, Vol. 7 No. 2 Nov/Dec 2009

Assessment is a key factor that contributes to a high-quality teaching and learning environment. The assessment focuses on identifying how many of the predefined education aims and goals have been achieved that also works as a feedback mechanism that educators should use to enhance their teaching practices. Thus, the assessment can be seen in the links that it forms with other education processes. On this matter, Lamprianou and Athanasou (2009:22) point out that the value of assessment is connected with the educational goals of "diagnosis, prediction, placement, evaluation, selection, grading, guidance or administration". Consequently, assessment is a critical part of the education process that provides information about the effectiveness of teaching and the progress of students and also makes clearer what teachers expect from students (Biggs, 1999).

Assessment is the process of collecting evidence and making judgments on whether competency has been achieved to confirm that the school or program can perform to and has accomplished

and achieved the standards expected by the stakeholders. It calls for the systematic collection, interpretation, and use of information about learning. It should provide teachers a better awareness of what pupils know and understand, what their learning experiences enable them to do, and what their skills and personal capabilities are. As such, the standards are normally described as the criteria requirements for the assessment. As noted by Teay, (2009) in "Balancing the EQA and IQA Equation" where EQA is accreditation, the IQA mechanisms that incorporate the internal audit and assessment process (Figure 1) leading to assurance of quality accomplishment should equate to the accreditation requirement. This means that the audit and assessment processes in the IQA are used to:

- Determine compliance and conformance to the Standards and criteria required of the national and international standards for academic performance and excellence,
- Determine whether people are either 'competent' or 'not yet competent' against the agreed academic standards,
- Determine whether "core processes" are in place and efficient in creating and delivering on the "results" as expected and needed by the stakeholders,
- Determine where the school or program is at any point in time and what can be continuously improved on or innovated on to bring about, meet and exceed the needs of the stakeholders.

Assessment, as defined in key literature, are:

- **Formative assessment** is a range of formal and informal assessment procedures used by teachers during the learning process so they can modify teaching and learning activities to improve pupil attainment. Formative assessment focuses on the process toward completing the product that provides feedback and information during the instructional process, while learning is taking place, and provides opportunities to develop more nuanced views about how students learn and adapt (ACT, 2017)
- **Summative assessment** comes at the end of a learning sequence and is used to acknowledge record and report on students' overall achievement at a given point. Summative assessment is an assessment that is used to signify competence or that contributes to a student's grade in a course, module, level, or degree. (O'Farrell, 2017).
- **Diagnostic assessment** is used to identify individual strengths, areas for improvement and to inform next steps. Diagnostic assessment can help identify students' current knowledge of a subject, their skill sets, and capabilities, and to clarify misconceptions before teaching takes place (ACT, 2017)

HEI evaluations have been described as "processes which use concepts and methods from the social and behavioral sciences to assess the organizations' current practices and find ways to increase their effectiveness and efficiency" (Universalia, 1993). The HEI evaluation is **an**

Evaluative assessment that is concerned with the overarching performance of arrangements in a department, school, or system (ACT, 2017). In preparing the HEI, college, or program for a self-study exercise or evaluative assessment leading to accreditation, the end output submitted for accreditation is the SSR (Self-Study Report). The IQA process covers the three main stages of Audit, Assessment, and Assurance of quality management of the educational services as follows:

- **AUDIT:** Audit is to ensure that the HEI, college, or program complies with the Standards that represent the Basic requirements of meeting compliance to the whole Standard holistically without dealing with the topical or detailed requirements. At the topical areas for each main Standard, the Criteria (Sub-Standards) represent the Overall requirements, whereby the sub-tropical areas within a Standard and Items (Sub-Sub-Standards) represent the multiple requirements of compliance.
- **ASSESSMENT:** Basically, the HEI has to demonstrate what and how they perform during the accreditation. This calls for the assessment or determination of the level of performance of both the processes for "efficiencies", and the results for "effectiveness of the achievements. Since there are two sets of the "Process" and "Results" criteria, the assessment and scoring evaluative factors used are different, but the scoring approach as explained in the later sections is similar. For the Process-Based Criteria that assess the processes set up to manage the quality of the Quality systems, mechanisms, tools, or techniques, the main rationale is to determine their Approach (A), Deployment (D), Learning (L), and Integration (I) meeting the Basic, Overall or the Multiple Requirements. The Result-Based Criteria that assess the performance indicators or measures are determined through the rationale of their Level of performance (Le), as well as the Trend (T), Comparison (C), and Integration (I) of the performance indicators or statistical results.
- **ASSURANCE:** The bottom-line for an HEI, college, or program is that the educational value that the stakeholder gets from the HEI, college, or program is an assurance of high quality, it delivers on what it claims to create and deliver based on its mission and goals. It includes opportunities for improvements with developmental planning to improve (continuous incremental improvements) or innovate (radical change by leapfrogging to a new "S" Curve) on what it has done and potentially does in the future. Assurance should bring about both (a) improvements and (b) development in the following areas:
    - The outcome of the assessment should identify the following:
        - Present Performance outcome based on evidence
        - Progressive performance outcome including the strengths and opportunities for improvement (on the Process ADLI and Results LeTCI)
    - Development is based on identifying the following:
        - Priorities for Improvement (based on the criterion or standard)
        - Comprehensive Development plan (that can be a set of action plans over 1 to 3 years)

Performance Assessment Tools and Approaches

In Performance Assessment, evidence is the Holy Grail testifying to the accomplishments and achievements of "student effectiveness". Both quantitative and qualitative data are normally utilized in institutional evaluations, depending on the issues being explored. Sources can be both internal and external to the HEI. A combination of qualitative and quantitative data is important, for unless tempered by other measures, quantitative measures considered in isolation can erode confidence in the evaluation process. By weaving qualitative with quantitative information, a deeper understanding of the HEI will be achieved. Quantitative data are important and take many forms, ranging from counts and other descriptive statistics to ratio variables such as measures of unit cost or productivity. All such data should conform to the best available standards of reliability and validity. Qualitative data has many forms and diverse sources. These include observational records of the HEI setting and its ambiance, data from interviews and group discussions, and written data ranging from letters of clients to formal questionnaires and inventories on the organizational culture. These forms of data, records, or documents can be gleaned from individuals inside the HEI as well as from peers and clients external to it. All this evidence is gathered to demonstrate competence in the skills and knowledge required by the units of competency contained in the school or program SSR. Common types of assessment methods used by assessors to gather evidence include:

(a) Direct Assessment:

- direct observation of the teaching & learning environment, physical infrastructure, evidential documents of accomplishments and achievements based on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-framed) objectives concerning the goals and mission of the HEI, college or programs;
- oral questioning of all targets respondents (administrators, faculty, students, stakeholders, staffs, strategic partners) of the realization of work performance efficiencies and effectiveness;
- demonstration of specific skills as defined in the "learning outcome" framework based on the student profile as guided by the HEI mission.

(b) Indirect Assessment:

- assessment of qualities of a final product which in this case is the "proficiencies of the graduates' competencies and capacities" defined by the "learning outcomes" as to what the graduate can do in real-life situations or work life;
- review of previous works undertaken by faculty and students which are more extra-curricular oriented that demonstrates the social skills, communicative skills, team-working skills, leadership, adaptability, creativity, or just basic human skills:

- written tests of underpinning knowledge, skills, and competence that forms part of the "screening", "attitudinal", "professional" or "standardized" test.

(c) Third-party Assessment:

- Testimonials from Employers of graduate utilization, graduate performance, and on-site skills development;
- Reports from Supervisors in fieldwork or internship or apprenticeship of the more "simulation and situational real-life" skills preparations and development;
- Work diary, Work reports, or logbook as documented actual work performed.

Specifically, there are two different types of assessment - *task* assessment and *evidence* assessment. As an assessor, one can look at a specific task to demonstrate their creation and delivery of knowledge and skills concerning the elements of a standard. Another way is to look for evidence of the school or program work already done to find something (or a range of things) that matches all the Standards and Criteria specified. All these are done concerning the goals and mission statement as the beacon of "term of reference". Whether it is by task or evidence, assessment can involve a variety of methods and approaches of which examples (Figure 2) are shown below:

<table>
<tr><th>Oral evidence</th><th>Written evidence</th></tr>
<tr><td>• Oral Answers to questions, feedback
• Presentation, Speech, Interview
• Peer instruction sessions</td><td rowspan="2">• Workplace documentation
• Portfolio (Faculty/Student/Course)
• Checklists, Worksheets, Forms
• Booklets, Reports, User manuals
• Charts, Tables, and posters
• Assignments, Written Questions, Tests
• Fill in gaps, Matching information, and Multi-choice (Not suitable for use where performance criteria call for school or program to describe)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Verification
Feedback (usually documented and signed) from:
• Faculty, Peers, Supervisors/ managers
• Administrative Support staff</td></tr>
<tr><th>Other</th><th>Practical evidence</th></tr>
<tr><td>• Cross-referencing from other assessments
• Recognition of current competence
• Integrated assessment
Note: Oral evidence needs to have clear evidence and judgment statements describing acceptable answers, and the oral evidence needs to be documented in some form.</td><td>• Observation – one-off occasions, or over some time
• Real-life situations, Demonstrations
• Video/Audiotapes
• Poster, Graphics, Visual representation
• Projects, Models
• Simulations, Naturally occurring evidence</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 2: Instrumentation of Performance Assessment

Assessors' Frame of Mind

In accreditation, many people will ask a very basic question of "what to expect" or "what the assessor will look for" from the assessor's perspective. Assessors are deemed to be professionals

who are highly trained and experienced who are trained to "see things what most people do not see critically and analytically". A better understanding of "what the assessor", "how they work" and more importantly "what their trained and focused mindset is looking for?". A better understanding of this key assessment process undertaken by the assessor is to look "inside" the mindset of the assessor. This is paper aim to demystify the assessment work of the assessor. They are not there to "find fault" with the HEI, College, or program. Their basic mission is two folds:

1. ***Determining the efficiencies of the Processes and Effectiveness of the Results concerning the mission and goals within the Standards and Criteria requirements –*** Based on the developed SSR (Self-Study Report) and evidence, the assessor will use the Standards and Criteria as the holistic requirements to audit and assess the HEI, college or program. The audit and assessment are of the processes efficiencies in arriving at a set of effective results within the context of the HEI, college, or program and meeting the minimum requirements. This audit and assessment also underpin the accomplishment and achievement of the mission and goals as the "beacon" or main term of reference of performance assessment.

2. ***Provide a "third party independent objective" evaluation of the HEI, college, or program*** – Based on the audited and assessed performance, the assessor will provide a set of value-added comments in terms of its strengths and a set of "opportunities for improvements" instead of referring them as weaknesses or areas to be improvements which have "negative intonations". The main aim here is to assist the HEI, college, or program to better understand their performance in terms of the "Strengths" and "Opportunities for Improvements".

Assessors, by their very nature, are highly trained scientists who are more research-oriented than heuristic-oriented. They had undergone hours of rigorous training and all weathered on-site experiences that had fine-tuned their mindset to find answers to the basic question of "well-performing or under-performing in the HEI, college or programmatic performance assessment". Their scientifically trained mind uses a very basic approach of the 5 "W"s and 1 "H" that is frequently used in any scientific research. In this case, the two main factors underpinning the performance of an entity are the process used to achieve the results. The core processes and results are underscored by the basic starting points of the strategic management (Teay and Al-Shehri, 2012) fundamentals of the Vision, Mission, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies (VMGOS) of any organization. One cannot escape from the fact that the HEI, College, and Program are organizational entities that are guided by the management principles or fundamentals that underscore their performance.

Analytical Mind	Typical Analytical Questions: HEI / College / Program graduates
WHAT?	• What do they mean by "HEI / College / Program graduate"? ➔ graduate profile • What is the profile of the "HEI / College / Program graduate"? ➔key attributes of outcomes accomplishment and achievements desired of the graduate • What outcomes measures are used to define the "HEI / College / Program graduate"? Are there defined LOs (Learning Outcomes)? ➔ key measures of the graduates' outcomes leading to the accomplishment of the graduate profile as aspired of the mission and goals of the HEI / College / Program • What are the Program Objectives? Are the SLOs that define measures of student effectiveness based on Program Objectives? ➔ Program Objectives guide the Program and Course Management development of the SLOs. • What development course of action takes place after the performance assessment?
WHY?	• Why is this "College / Program graduate" and its profile established? ➔ accomplish the mission and meeting societal and national agenda, and workplace requirements
WHO?	• Who do the defined outcome measurements? • Who makes use of the measurements for informed decision-making? • Who takes action on these measured outcomes for follow-up or developmental planning?
WHERE?	• Where will the responsibilities and accountabilities be assigned to in the organizational entity? • Where will the evidential "processes" and "results" be measured?
WHEN?	• When are they measured? • When are the outcomes used?
HOW?	• How is the "College / Program graduate" and its profile determined? • How are the "College / Program graduate" outcomes measured and assessed? (SLO ➔ course and program specifications ➔ teaching and assessment pedagogy ➔ achievement of SLO ➔ use of findings to define the graduate effectiveness
ULTIMATELY	**"EFFICIENCY of PROCESS" AND "EFFECTIVENESS of RESULTS" affecting the "outcomes that define and underscore the HEI / College / Program Graduate accomplishment and achievement" ➔ GRADUATE EFFECTIVENESS**

Figure 3: Assessor Frame of mind

The assessor basic mindset is illustrated by the "Frame of Mind" of the assessor (Figure 3) and espoused in the basic research mindset of the assessor "critical and analytical thinking" assessment frame of mind as:

1. ***WHAT*** **–** What "Processes" in terms of its systems, mechanisms, techniques, plans, policies, procedures are in place to accomplish and achieve "WHAT they intend to do".
2. ***WHY*** **–** The Processes are designed and developed to accomplish and achieve the "WHAT is the purpose" of the strategic or operational intent. This is the starting place where any assessor will begin, to start the analysis and assessment with a good understanding of HEI, College or Program of the following:
    a. **Vision –** This defines the "What we WANT to be";
    b. **Mission –** This defines the "What we CAN be based on our capacity and capabilities" or the "purpose" or the "reason for existence" of the entity;
    c. **Goals –** These are the broad key directional areas of focus of the mission that underscores the whole entity of what areas are the main enablers or pillars that underpin its performance;

d. **Objectives –** These are the SMART part of the goals that underpin or guides the performance metrics in each core area and the subordinate areas of the core areas;
e. *Strategies* – In a strategic management sense, these represent the "WHAT to do and HOW to do" to accomplish and achieve the SMART Objectives, the goals, and ultimately the mission of the HEI, college, or program. These are the strategic "core processes and their sub-processes" to create and deliver educational value.

3. ***WHO –*** Once the strategies have been defined, the human attributes of WHO, the people, are assigned responsibilities and accountability of people with capacities and capabilities or in human resources terminologies "putting the right person in the right job".
4. ***WHERE –*** Once the human capacities and capabilities needs have been defined and required of core processes and expected results accomplishments, the physical structure will be defined to undertake the core processes value-added actions and accomplishments.
5. ***WHEN –*** The key to this is the timing or time frame of the actions that take place and the timing or time frame of the process efficiencies measurements to accomplish the mission and the goals. The main tenet here is the "management through measurement" as these timely measurements will support informed decision-making.
6. ***HOW –*** The key to this is to identify what systems, mechanisms, techniques, policies, and procedures are in place that identifies the "core processes that add value" efficiencies and the "results" effectiveness.

Based on the research mindset, the assessor will start "putting the parts and pieces" together to come up with a holistic approach to audit and assessment (Figure 4). The assessor will begin with the determination and understanding of the HEI mission, goals, and objectives. This HEI level mission and goals determine or guide the collegial mission, goals, and objectives, all the way down to the programmatic mission, goals, and objectives. The key is that they are "aligned" which represents the beginning of the audit trail of integration.

AUDIT Trail – At the program level, the program is required to determine and specify its SMART objectives (Approach). These objectives are the "rally point" of both the processes that need to be created and to deliver (Deployment) on the educational value. The educational value is student effectiveness. This student effectiveness as the key measure of students' performances is constituted from the learning outcomes at the program and course levels (the PLOs – Program Learning Outcomes, with the CLOs – Course Learning Outcomes mapped to the PLOs) in the PLO/CLOs matrix. This PLO/CLOs matrix is to show that all courses CLOs within the program contributes to the program PLOs. For each course, the teaching strategies are defined by the teaching methods of lecturing, case study, simulations, and observations or practical that are underscored by its CLOs. The teaching strategies are mapped to the assessment methods that can be exams, case studies, projects, and quiz. For each of the assessment methods used, the types of questions used in multi-choice formats, fill-in-the-blanks, or essays are

mapped to determine which of the CLOs are measured. The tabulation of the scoring based on the response to these assessments forms part of the overall determination of the different types SLOs accomplishment like knowledge, skills, critical thinking, analytical thinking, numeric & computation skills, communication, all of which are zeroed into the SCI (Student Competency Index) as the key result measure of student effectiveness. All these in turn serve as measures of performance accomplishments of the program objectives.

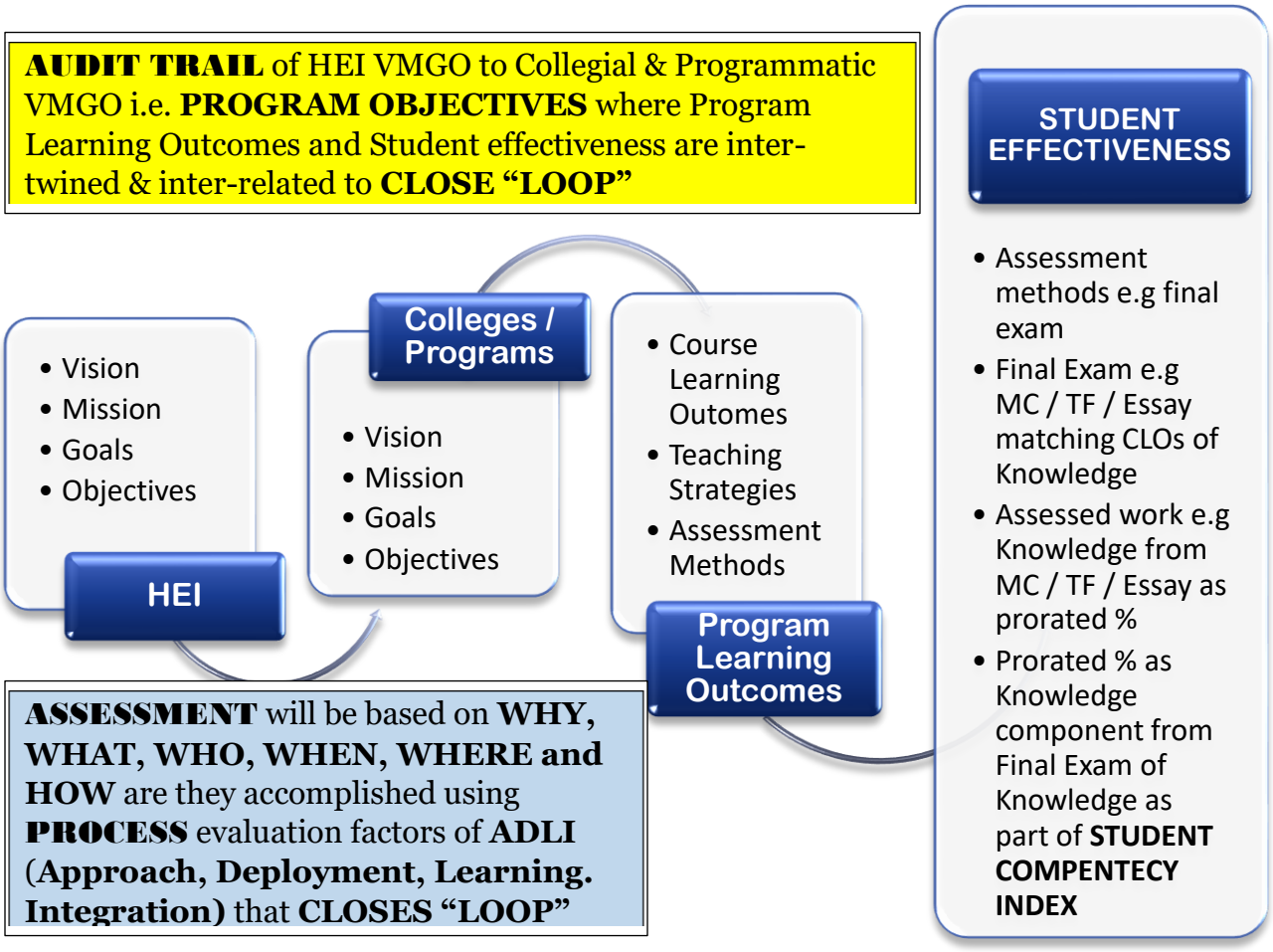


Figure 4: The Audit Trail and Assessment within the Assessor Frame of Mind

ASSESSMENT – In the case of assessment of the overall process as shown in the audit trail, if all those "Student Competency Index" components of learning outcomes identified in the PLOS/CLOs matrix with teaching and assessment methods specifications and measurements implemented (the APPROACH and DEPLOYMENT), it correlates with the maturity of the processes and practices. In addition, after each course, there are two things to determine if personal learning by the student as indicated by the SCI, and that of the instructor of courses of improvements to be taken by the instructor of each of the individual improvements or development of the students or the course context and

content. This will also contribute to the organizational learning when they are aggregated to determine the performance of all sections, within a course, all courses within a program, and all programs with a college. These can also serve as internal benchmarking of performance-critical to organizational learning in accomplishing the course/program/college and HEI goals and objectives (LEARNING and INTEGRATION).

Two Generic Assessment Rubrics

(1) DEMING CYCLE PDCA RUBRIC

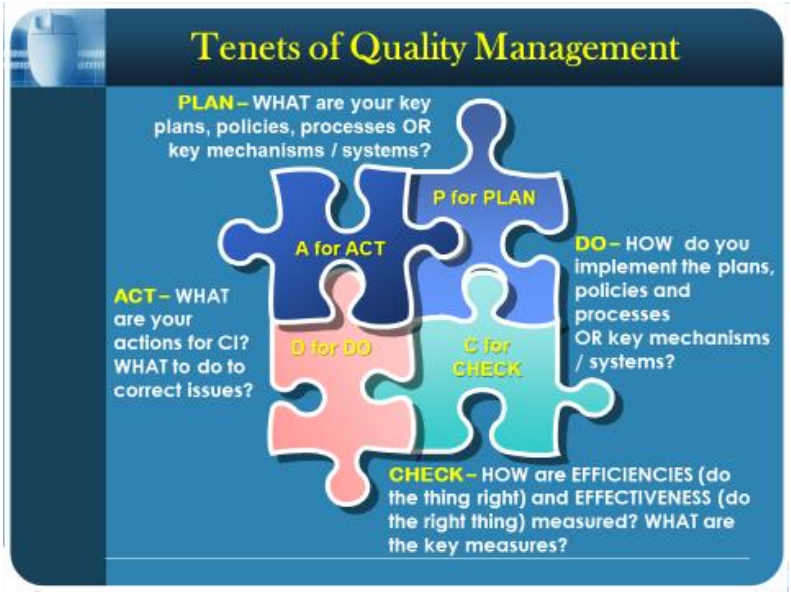


Figure 5: The Tenets of Deming PDCA Cycle

Walter Shewhart (Shewhart, 1939) discussed the concept of the continuous improvement cycle (Plan Do Check Act) in his 1939 book, "Statistical Method from the Viewpoint of Quality Control". The Stewart cycle (PDCA) was modified by Deming to what is now referred to as the Deming Cycle PDCA (Plan, Do, Check, Act) or the modified version of PDSA (Plan, Do, Study, Act) (Deming, 1950 and 1993). It is a key and frequently used continuous improvement tool by all assessors. The key focus is to find closure to "Close the loop of PDCA" (Moen, et.al, 1991; Langley, 2009) (Figure 5) of any academic plan and solution by determining the:

1. ***PLAN –*** The PLAN represents the WHAT & WHY for planning as:
    a. The WHAT calls for identifying the problem faced by the HEI, college, or program to be examined, formulation of a specific problem statement to clearly define the problem, setting attainable goals and measurable objectives, identify stakeholders, and developing necessary communication channels to communicate and gain approval for the plan implementation.
    b. The WHY is to divide the overall system into individual processes and map the process by brainstorming potential causes for the problem, collect and analyze

data to validate the root cause, formulation a hypothesis, and verifying or revise the original problem statement.

2. ***DO*** **–** The DO covers the development of solutions or the processes by establishing the implementation and the success criteria, designing processes and sub-processes to "get work done to accomplish the goals and objectives, and gaining stakeholder support for the chosen solution in the form of key processes.
3. ***CHECK*** **–** The CHECK of evaluation of the results gathering/analyzing data on the solution and validating the processes accomplishment that is the efficiency of the process to achieve the desired goals which is the effectiveness of the results. If it achieves the goal, then go to Act, if not go to Plan.
4. ***ACT*** **–** The ACT calls for implementing the full solution and capitalize on new opportunities. This is to identify the systemic changes and training needs for full implementation, plan for ongoing monitoring of solutions, and continuous improvements or improvement opportunities.

In the assessment process, the assessor's mindset to "Close the Loop" is to:

1. ***Plan & Do*** **–** Ask for the plans in support of the HEI mission and goals, determine how the HEI implement the plan in terms of its key processes, mechanisms, systems or technique, policies, procedures, and people;
2. ***Check & Act*** **–** Request for the HEI to demonstrate the efficiencies and effectiveness of the implementation of their processes and the results that will advise on the future course of actions or opportunities for improvements.

(2) PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE RUBRICS

Another main set of a rubric that is beginning to find traction in the assessment of the academic cores is the Education Criteria of the MBNQA (Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award) Performance Excellence Standards (NIST, 2018). This is one of the two main Performance Excellence frameworks used by many countries in managing and assessing the performance of profit and non-profit business entities leading to the National Quality Awards. Seven Education Criteria serve as basic requirements that specify subsets of overall requirements or key or comprehensive core areas of the criteria. Each overall requirement defines sub-ordinated but more definitive and specific itemized multiple requirements. The Criteria have two main sets of Process criteria which are enablers and the Results criteria that are the statistical data or performance metrics that serve as key measures of performance.

Process-Based Assessment (Figure 6) – The main aim is to determine how the HEI or College has planned, executed, and achieved the Items, Criteria and Standards requirements based on systematic processes that represent the EFFICIENCIES of the processes to create and add to the educational value:

- ***AUDIT of Process*** – Based on the Audit, the aim is to find answers to whether the processes defined substantiate what is and what is not complied with or conformed to the Standards requirements. In this case, then, the assessment is either "0" or the beginning of something being planned or is in place to meet the requirements.
- ***ASSESSMENT of Process*** – For Items that are complied with, assessment of the processes efficiencies is done by determining:
  - Whether the systems, mechanisms, techniques, plans, policies, and procedures underscore the PROCESS of "What has been done or are in place and how it has been SYSTEMATICALLY done" ***(APPROACH).***
  - Whether all personnel in the work units (DEPLOYMENT) apply the systems, mechanisms, and tools used comprehensively in all work units. This is important as it points to all personnel's understanding of the process and "walk the talk" of using the same process to accomplish a unified set of strategic or operational goals.
  - Whether there are new or continuous improvements or innovations, these are the indications of ***(LEARNING).*** This learning aspect is unclear in the PDCA approach. This learning aspect has two main aspects of organizational learning and personal learning. Regardless of which, both should contribute to incremental continuous improvements or radical changes that constitute innovations. This innovation is the leapfrogging to a new "S" technology or learning curve that is a core of the performance excellence framework.
  - Whether the actions and activities are reviewed interactively with other Criteria, Standards, or work units ***(INTEGRATION).*** This integration ensures that all aspects of the organizational entity work together cooperatively and collaboratively as a holistic whole (that is the sum of the whole being greater than the sum of the parts) towards the same directional strategic or operation goals.

The framework of analysis is based on the ADLI (Approach, Deployment, Learning, and Integration) as evaluative factors or rubrics of assessment of each of the key or core processes in the academic entity to accomplish or achieve its mission and goal. However, seemingly independent, the ADLI is an iterative and integrative set of interdependent albeit progressive criteria that shows progressive maturity. The rationale is that the approach that is systematic and effective means that it demonstrates the beginning of the maturity of the deployment that reaches all units. If there is a systematic and effective approach that is well deployed, it should pave the way or foundation of incremental and continuous improvements or radical changes brought about by innovation. This effectively forms the "learning" aspects that should be well integrated from the organizational to personal levels to accomplish the organization's strategic or operational goals.

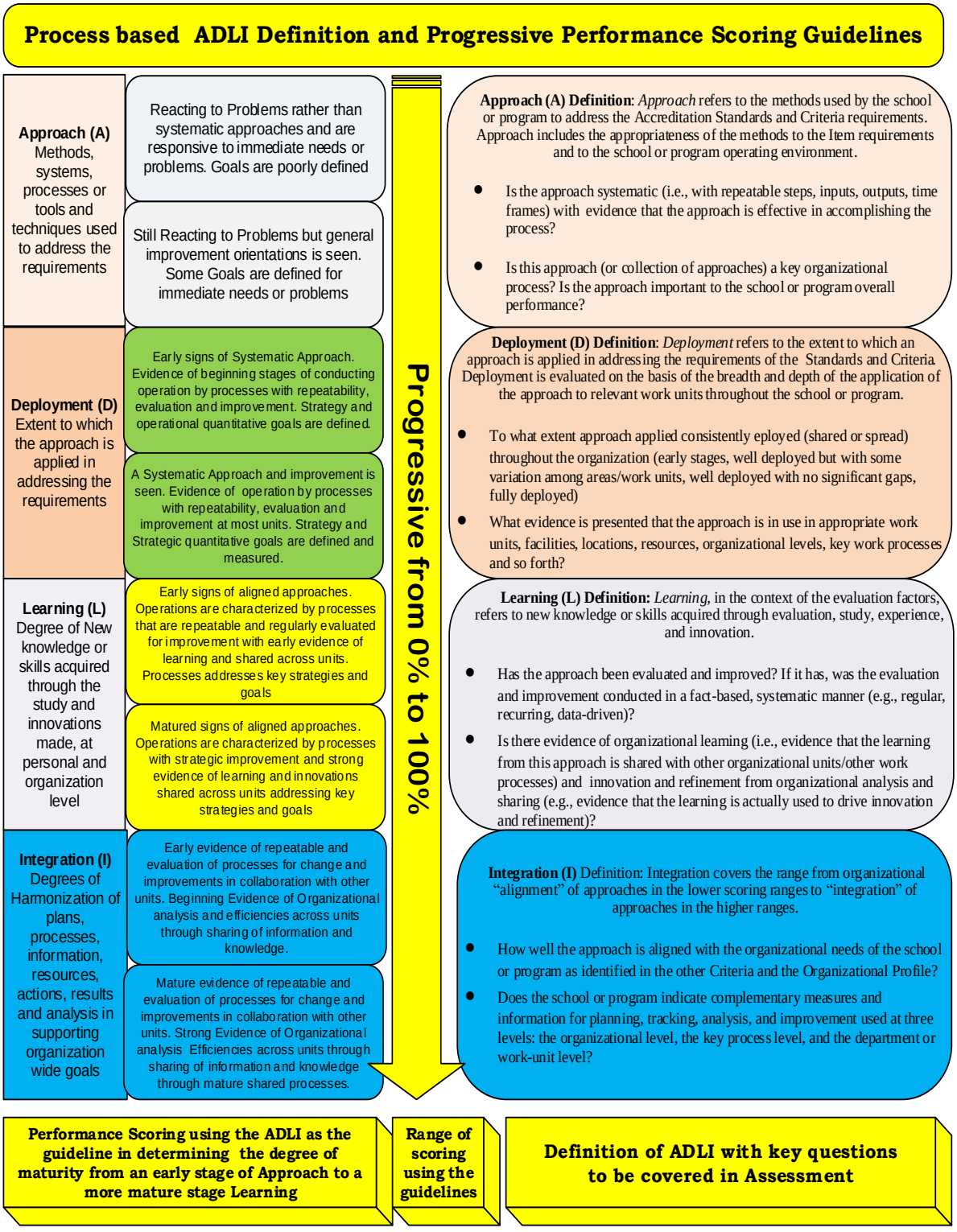


Figure 6: Definition of ADLI and the progressive scoring based on Maturity of Process

Source: Adapted from NIST (2015), *Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award 2015/2016 Criteria for Performance Excellence*, National Institute of Standards and Technology, US Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., Available at: www.nist.gov/

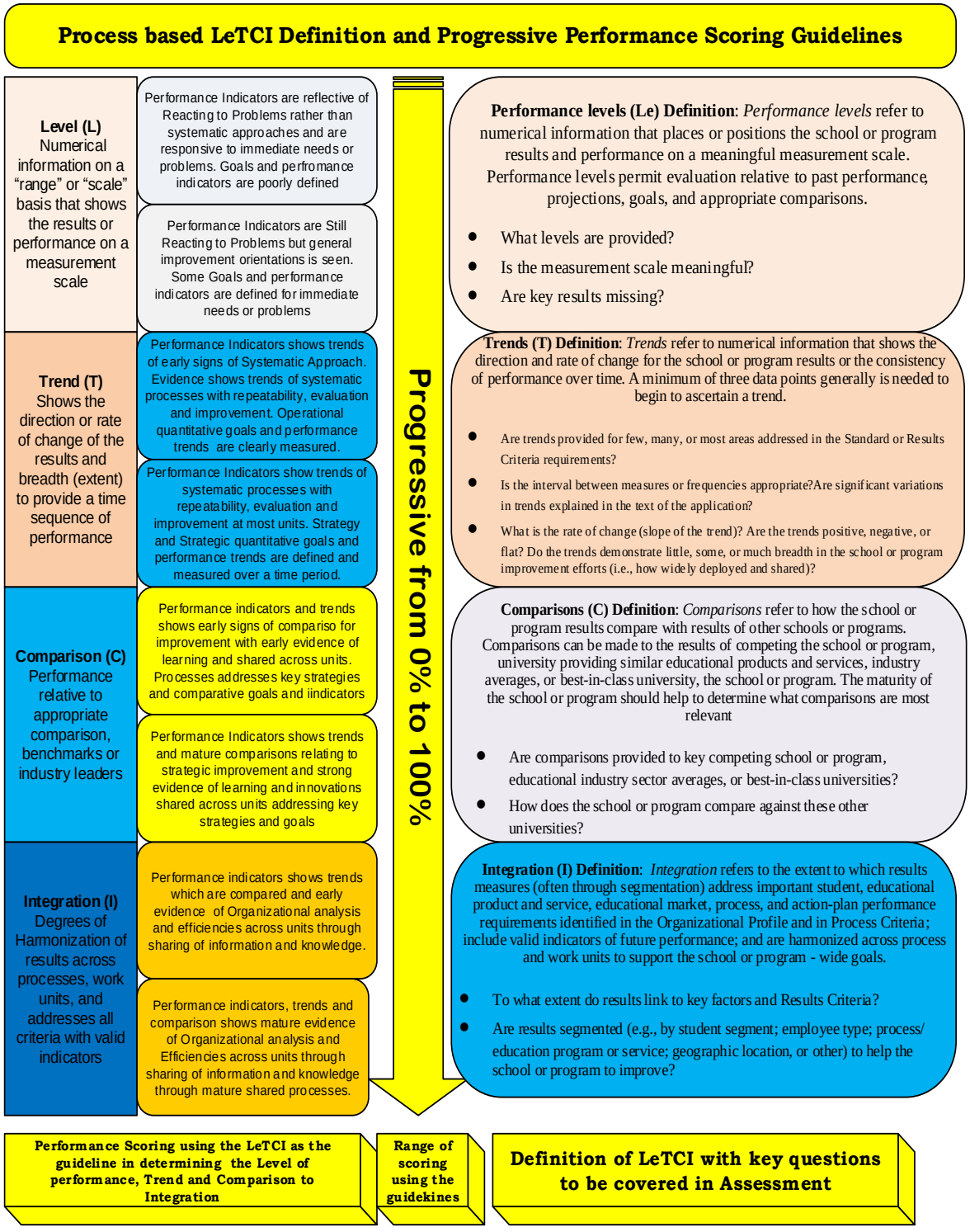


Figure 7: Definition of LeTCI and the progressive scoring based on the degree of performance

Source: Adapted from NIST (2015), *Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award 2015/2016 Criteria for Performance Excellence*, National Institute of Standards and Technology, US Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., Available at: www.nist.gov/

Result-Based Assessment (Figure 7) – The main aim is to determine what performance level and trend the HEI, college, or program has achieved on the Standard requirements as evidenced by the systematic and effective processes (Process-Based Criteria) to create and deliver on educational value. The key here to the educational values is the "result" of the process creation and delivery of these values. These can be statistical data or performance metrics. This is the EFFECTIVENESS part of the process, which are evidenced by the Statistical data and Performance Metrics:

- Based on the Assessment of the Process-based Criteria, a high scoring criterion based on an agreed-upon scoring rubrics will mean that there is evidence of a stated level of performance and that there is at least a trend analysis of 2 to 3 years that is also comparative.
- For both the Statistical data and Performance Metrics, assessment is done by determining:
  - The level of performance is based on the "range" for Statistical data and Performance Metrics used and the "level" ***(LEVEL)*** for each of these performance metric accomplished or achieved.
  - Whether there is a trend analysis of performance throughout 1 to 3 years that shows a positive or normal trend ***(TREND)*** for each of the Statistical data and Performance metrics measured.
  - Whether there are any benchmarks or best practices used for comparison, and Statistics or Information of the comparison ***(COMPARISON)*** to determine how well the Statistical data and Performance Metrics is doing in comparison to internal or external or industry benchmarks.
  - Whether the Statistical data and Performance Metrics are reviewed interactively with other Criteria, Standards, or work units ***(INTEGRATION)*** to show alignment and integration across all Statistical data and Performance Metrics, that accomplish the same sets of goals and objectives.

(3) Comparisons between rubrics of Deming Cycle PDCA and Performance Excellence ADLI and LeTCI

Most of the existent continuous improvements tools or techniques like TQM, Six Sigma, and Lean Management (Andersson, et.al., 2006), for quality and continuous improvements, have their unique features concerning the main theory, approach but are mostly similar especially concerning origin, methodologies, tools, and effects. These range from the TQM is a management system consisting of values, methodologies, and tools to increase external and internal customer satisfaction with a reduced amount of resources, (Hellsten and Klefsjo, 2000). Six sigma is defined as "a business process that drastically improves their bottom line by designing and monitoring everyday business activities in ways that minimize waste and resources while increasing customer satisfaction"(Magnusson et. al., 2003). NIST (2000) defines

Lean Management as "A systematic approach to identifying and eliminating waste through continuous improvement, flowing the product at the pull of the customer in pursuit of perfection". All these have the main fundamentals of continuous improvements through key processes of minimizing waste and optimizing resources all aimed at improving customer satisfaction and financial results.

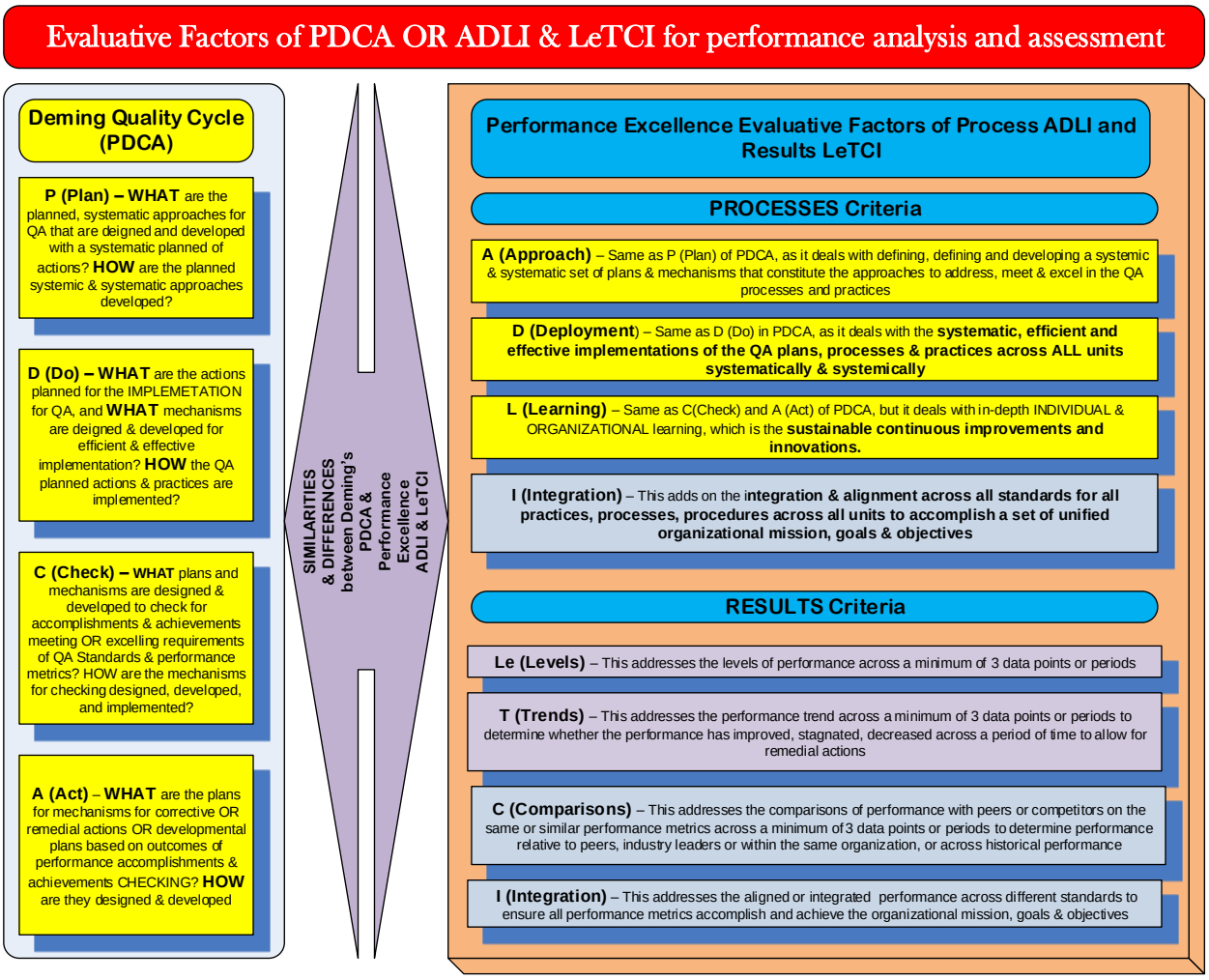


Figure 8: Comparison of the PDCA and Performance Excellence ADLI and LeTCI

While there are numerous contending continuous improvements tools, they are reliant on two main aspects of improvements of the "processes or means" to an end, the results. The processes are the efficiencies of the basic systems, approaches, techniques, mechanisms, policies, and procedures as the key means to the ends that are the results. These results are the effectiveness of the outputs and outcomes desired of each of these tools. The basic rubrics of Deming Cycle PDCA and the Performance Excellence Process ADLI and Results LeTCI have been widely used to frame the continuous improvements and innovations of these tools. While the PDCA and

ADLI & LeTCI have the same fundamentals for continuous improvements, the rubrics similarities and differences (Figure 8) are in:

(a) **Similarities –** Key similarities of the approaches, systems, mechanisms, tools, techniques that are the means to the ends are in the PDC and ADL of both rubrics. All these focus on the systematic and effective approaches that are planned and implemented through its deployment and are checked for improvements. While the CHECK and ACT aspect of the PDCA is the determination of whether the implementation yields results of continuous improvements, there appears to be a question that it might or might not lead to learning on a longer-term basis. Whereas the LEARNING aspect ADLI highlight two main important aspects both improvements and innovations of: (i) organizational and personal learning as opposed to just continuous improvements aimed at incremental improvements along with the same "S" Learning Curve, and (ii) the more radical change expected of innovation to leapfrog of a new "S" Learning Curve.

(b) **Differences –** The key aspect of the ADLI integration facet underscores a very important trait of alignment and integrated aspects of systems, mechanisms, plans, policies, and processes interactions and relationships across systems and sub-systems, the interrelatedness of goals leading to the same directional mission that is understated in the PDCA rubrics. This integration underlies the importance of "the sum of the whole is greater than the sum of the pieces". A key feature imminently clear in the PDCA rubric is the measurement aspects that are highlighted by the LeTCI of measurements of the results or statistical data and performance metrics. This underscores the importance of the tenet of "management through measurements", which means that for an entity to be managed well, it must measure its performance to determine its degree of performance in terms of its level, trend, and comparisons with internal and external benchmarks and integration.

Both of the rubrics frameworks have the same fundamentals for the assessment practices in determining and assessing continuous improvements on any entity. Both of them are powerful continuous improvements tools, but they are only as good as the depth and width of experience of the assessor, the knowledge and skills of the assessors in getting the rubrics to "work its magic" to determine the entity performance against the Standards and Criteria. This means that all frameworks or rubrics theoretically work, but practically the rubrics are only as good as the assessors' competencies. The PDCA is a much more simplistic and widely used rubric in most academic assessments. On the other hand, the Performance Excellence rubrics are more objective in highlighting the "process as the means to an end which is the results". Both the "means to an end" are objectively measured for processes efficiencies and results effectiveness that is more subjective and open-ended in the PDCA rubrics.

Systematic Approach of Assessor in Assessing a Standard

Figure 9: Systematic approach of Assessor's work

Source: NIST, (2015), *MBNQA Education Criteria for Performance Excellence,* Step-by-Step Instructions for INDEPENDENT REVIEW Scorebook Preparation, National Institute of Science and Technology US Department of Commerce, Washington, D.C., Available at: www.nist.gov/

Assessment does not mean just reading the SSR and score its performance. In the Performance Excellence methodology, there are stringent mechanisms that guide these assessments. To kick-start any assessment, the assessors normally adhere to a basic framework of assessment that they have been trained thoroughly and stringently in. There are certain systematic approaches or methodologies (Figure 9) that all assessors, regardless of frameworks, use to create and deliver on the final PAR (Performance Assessment Report) as follows:

STAGE 1 – INDIVIDUAL REVIEW

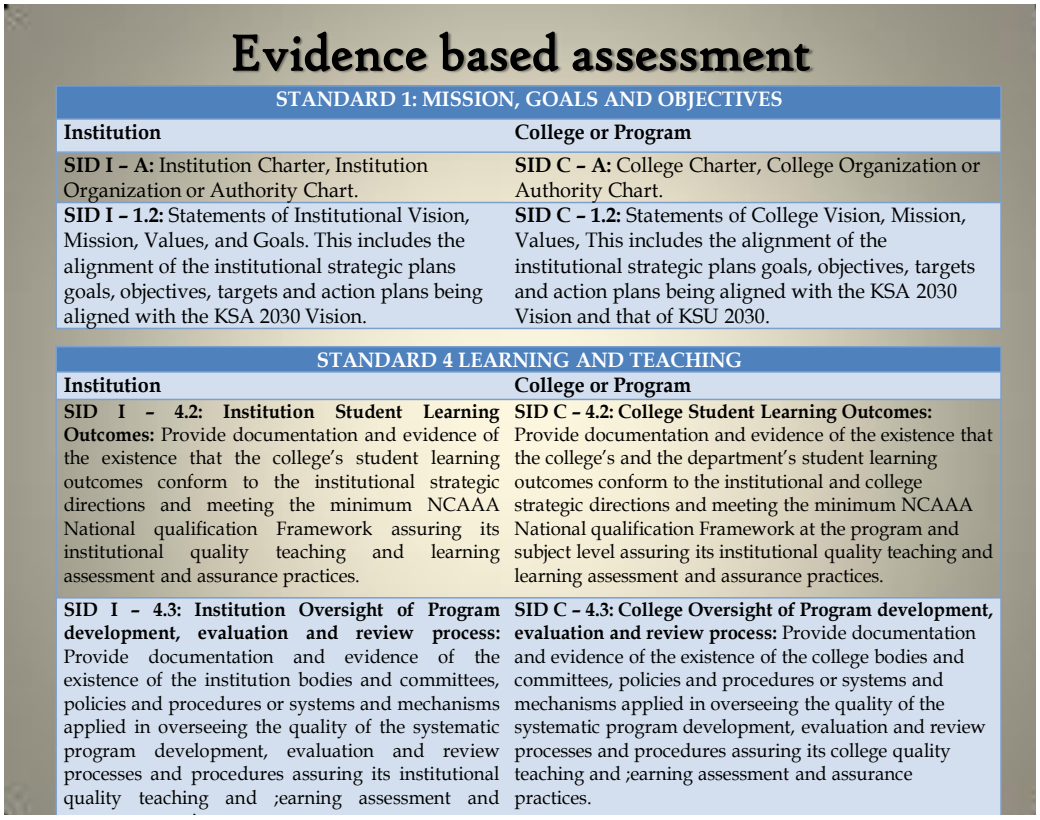
STEP 1: When the assessor gets the SSR (Self-Study Report), the first thing that s/he does is to read each of the Standards manual and its Criteria and Items requirements. The main objective is to refresh and gain a common and strong understanding of the Standards requirements. The Standards is the main rallying point that all assessors use as the guide for addressing issues or differing interpretations of the evidence or justifications arising from the assessment.

STEP 2: The assessor will then read the SSR to get a "general feel" of what the HEI or program has developed or justified in their performance with evidence in their SSR. A second reading will see the assessor reading in more detail supported with

highlights/post-it/underlining/margin comments to highlight key areas of "strengths or opportunities" to be stressed in the analysis.

STEP 3: In the third reading, the assessor will start analyzing the SSR to identify areas of "strengths" or "opportunities for improvements. S/He will conduct a preliminary performance assessment based on ADLI for process-based criteria or LeTCI for result-based criteria.

a. As assessment is evidence-based whereby one would need to determine the facts and evidence which is the Statistical Data, Information, and Documentation needed (Figure 10). A rule of thumb is to look at the criteria and standards requirements and analyze them holistically, to determine the MAJOR or Comprehensive evidence that can directly or indirectly support each of the items and criteria and the overall standard.



Evidence based assessment

STANDARD 1: MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	
Institution	**College or Program**
SID I – A: Institution Charter, Institution Organization or Authority Chart.	**SID C – A:** College Charter, College Organization or Authority Chart.
SID I – 1.2: Statements of Institutional Vision, Mission, Values, and Goals. This includes the alignment of the institutional strategic plans goals, objectives, targets and action plans being aligned with the KSA 2030 Vision.	**SID C – 1.2:** Statements of College Vision, Mission, Values, This includes the alignment of the institutional strategic plans goals, objectives, targets and action plans being aligned with the KSA 2030 Vision and that of KSU 2030.

STANDARD 4 LEARNING AND TEACHING	
Institution	**College or Program**
SID I – 4.2: Institution Student Learning Outcomes: Provide documentation and evidence of the existence that the college's student learning outcomes conform to the institutional strategic directions and meeting the minimum NCAAA National qualification Framework assuring its institutional quality teaching and learning assessment and assurance practices.	**SID C – 4.2: College Student Learning Outcomes:** Provide documentation and evidence of the existence that the college's and the department's student learning outcomes conform to the institutional and college strategic directions and meeting the minimum NCAAA National qualification Framework at the program and subject level assuring its institutional quality teaching and learning assessment and assurance practices.
SID I – 4.3: Institution Oversight of Program development, evaluation and review process: Provide documentation and evidence of the existence of the institution bodies and committees, policies and procedures or systems and mechanisms applied in overseeing the quality of the systematic program development, evaluation and review processes and procedures assuring its institutional quality teaching and ;earning assessment and	**SID C – 4.3: College Oversight of Program development, evaluation and review process:** Provide documentation and evidence of the existence of the college bodies and committees, policies and procedures or systems and mechanisms applied in overseeing the quality of the systematic program development, evaluation and review processes and procedures assuring its college quality teaching and ;earning assessment and assurance practices.

Figure 10: Samples of Evidence that Assessor will look for

Source: KSU, (2017) KSU-QMS Quality Management System: Handbook 2 on SID Statistics, Information and Documentations, 4th Edition, May 2017, King Saud University Press, Riyadh, KSA.

b. **EXAMPLE 1 of assessing the research standard –** One of the key requirements in the performance of assessment is a Research Plan that should comprehensively address and cover all the main criteria in the research standard. Once the main evidence is found, which is, in this case, the research Plan, the assessor will use the 5 "W" and the 1 "H" approach to "Close the Loop" for Research by

determining, analyzing, assessing, and scoring the performance of the Research Plan as supported by evidence using ADLI and LeTCI of the following:

i. Is there a research plan (which is the approach) used? ***(Approach of ADLI Process)***
ii. Is the research plan implemented? ***(Deployment of ADLI Process)***
iii. How is the research plan implemented and utilized to address the criteria and the requirements of the item? ***(Deployment and Learning of ADLI Process)***
iv. What are the main milestones or achievements in terms of the key measures of effectiveness? ***(LeTCI of Result)***
v. Are there any key strengths or opportunities for improvement? ***(Deployment, Learning, and Integration of Process)***
vi. What sort of new or further improvements or innovations is needed to bring about continuous improvement? This is the development plan. ***(Learning and Integration of Process)***

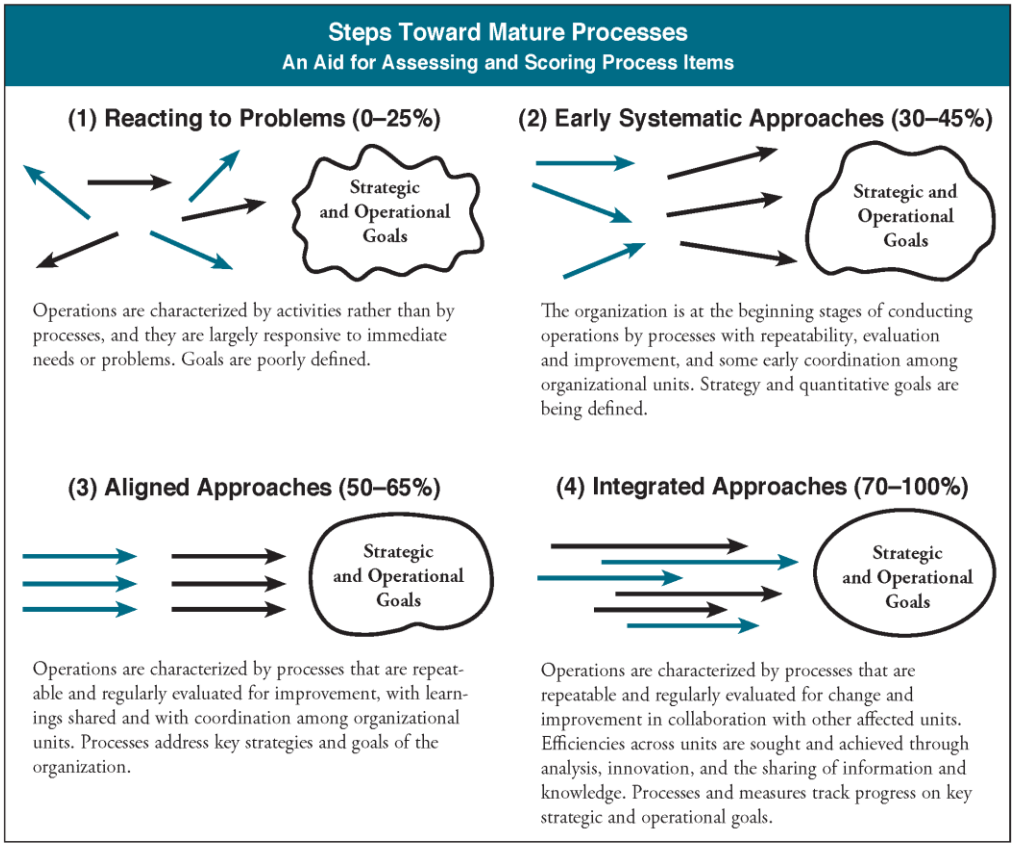


Figure 11: Guidelines of performance scoring based on MATURITY of Process

Source: NIST, (2016), *Baldrige Performance Excellence Program: 2015 – 2016 Baldrige Performance Excellence Framework: A Systems Approach to Improving Your Organization's Performance*, National Institute of Standards and Technology, US Department of Commerce, Gaithersburg, MD, http://www.nist.gov/baldrige

Performance scoring of the process is based on the degree of maturity of the process itself (Figure 11). This degree of maturity is reflected in the evidence as to whether the HEI or program demonstrates the Range 1 (0% to 25%) and 2 (30% to 45%) performance band of starting on "beginning of a systematic and effective approach" that guides the accomplishment. All accomplishments and achievements use the HEI or programmatic strategic goals as the "flag pole" as the "terminal point" of a set of milestones to be attained. A more mature approach is demonstrated when most of the processes are aligned or integrated towards the accomplishment of the strategic or operational goal that is in Band 3 (50% to 60%) and 4 (70% to 100%).

c. **EXAMPLE 2 of Plan of Enquiry for an academic program special or focus area –** Here are some sample key evaluation questions on the focus area of student effectiveness in an academic program (this example combines these two closely associated questions):

   i. How well do learners achieve?
   ii. What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?

SAMPLES of some possible inquiry questions:

- ✓ What is the extent and quality of the information on learner progress and achievement and how convincing do, they serve as evidence of achievements? ***(Approach and Deployment of Process)***
- ✓ How well is the information interpreted to understand learner achievement in terms of 'met needs' as guided by the "Term of Reference" which is the mission and goals? ***(Approach and Deployment of Process)***
- ✓ What use is made of this understanding for program design or improvement purposes once the accomplishments have been met? ***(Learning and Integration of Process)***
- ✓ What evidence is there of actual improvements in shorter-term outcomes/outputs (e.g. course and qualification completion)? ***(Deployment, Learning, and Integration of Process)***
- ✓ How well does the school or program make the connection between longer-term outcomes and the shorter-term outcomes (outputs) of tertiary study meeting the aims of the mission of the HEI and goals? ***(Integration of Process)***
- ✓ How well does the school or program determine the value of the longer-term outcomes in terms of employers and business, possible further study, or positive contribution to local and wider communities? ***(Integration of Process)***

- ✓ How well does the school or program use self-assessment information to understand and improve performance in this area? ***(Learning and Integration of Process)***

SAMPLES of some possible sources of evidence, statistical data, or performance metrics are:

- ✓ Employment outcomes, career advancement, creative enterprise, voluntary work, community participation, further achievement in scholarship, research, publications, or awards? (taken from alumni information, graduate surveys, employer surveys, economic trend data, societal trend data, census data, etc.) ***(Level and Trend of Result)***
- ✓ Trends from learner assessment information, improving trends over time that are crossed referenced to other relevant programs and schools or programs, evidence that demonstrates that the school or program uses benchmarking information to revise/set its goals and expectations appropriately. ***(Level, Trend, and Comparison of Result)***
- ✓ Evidence and Trends of positive changes in literacy and numeracy, concentration and study skills, communication and interpersonal skills based on the Program/Course Learning Outcomes including learner progress/ educational value-added guided by the Program Objectives and higher-level HEI goals. ***(Level and Trend of Result)***
- ✓ Evidence of positive changes in motivation, life skills, self-management, physical health, cultural awareness, sense of belonging, community engagement, family relationships ***(Level, Trend, Comparison and Integration of Result)***
- ✓ Evidence is drawn from publications, citations, research outputs, consultancies, presentations, cooperative ventures, new technologies, new or improved industry/business processes and products, community initiatives. (***Comparisons and Integration of Result)***
- ✓ Trends in economic data, employment statistics, health statistics, education participation and outcomes, census data. (***Comparisons and Integration of Result)***

STEP 4: In Individual Reviews, all assessors must complete a comprehensive analysis and assessments of all the Standards in the Self-Study Report individually. These analyses and assessments are recorded in the worksheets provided by the accreditation agencies to the assessor to use to record their analysis and assessment that forms the beginning of the development of the consensus leading to the final report. In the assessment of Standards, Standards are assigned to two assessors with one as the Standard Lead, and the second one as Standard Back. The Standard Lead will develop

Version 1 of the analysis and assessment of each Standard that contributes to the PAR in terms of Value Added Comments.

STAGE 2 – CONSENSUS REVIEW

STEP 5: In practice, during the Consensus Reviews, there are two types of consensus as follows:

- ✓ ***Development of Versions 1 (V1), Back (VB), and 2 (V2) analysis and assessment between two assessors –*** Once the Standard Lead has developed the Version 1 from Step 4, it is sent to the Standard Back who will review, add on, modify based on the inputs of all assessors, and come up with a Version Back (VB). Using the Version Back (VB), the Standard Lead will agree to, refine or modify and develop a Version 2 (V2) which is then put to the whole team for consensus.
- ✓ **Consensus by Team –** When all the Versions 2 (V2) have been developed, the Team Leader will initiate the Consensus Meeting whereby all the team members will come together. The whole team will go through each of the analyses and assessment of each Standard and its Items as recorded in Version 2 (V2). In this part of the overall analysis and assessment, both the Standard Lead and Standard Back will lead the discussion to get a consensus agreement of all team members for each Standard under its assigned responsibility. The resulting version is the Version Consensus (VC) that will be the core and main analyzed and assessed Value Added Comments for that Standard to be finalized in the final report. This seemly time-consuming and time easting process has very significant importance in vetting the analysis and assessment in four progressive versions that only strengthen the assessment process through consensus building.

STAGE 3 – SITE VISIT and FINZALIZATION of PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT REPORT

STEP 6: While the assessors have nearly completed to a degree of 95% work done on the final PAR, there are still some additional doubts or evidence that needs more clarifications for "Opportunities for Improvements" and verifications for "Strengths". This gives rise to the SVI (Site Visit Issues) whereby the following are specified:

- ✓ ***Identify the SVI –*** It should be noted that the Site Visit is NOT to just visit or pay a courtesy call or check on missing evidence or statistical data or document. In the process of the analysis and assessment, certain issues need clarification or verification, and due to the time constraint of a 5-days site visit, only key issues need to be identified and addressed. A recommended format is to define the SVI as a "research question"
- ✓ ***Information needed for the SVI –*** There is a difference between "information" and evidence. Evidence can be documents, statistics, and documentation of plans,

policies, procedures, or processes, statistical data, and tables of analysis or performance metrics. Information is what details, particulars, facts, figures, statistics, data are needed to better understand the issue at hand, and not wholesale evidence. The key is what information is needed to answer the research question as raised in the SVI.

- ✓ ***Target Group identified*** **–** The next thing is to define who will be the main respondent(s) to be targeted to get answers to the information as needed of the SVI.
- ✓ ***Specific questions developed*** **–** Based on the SVI, the information needed will be designed and developed into specific questions that provide answers to the research question as formulated in the SVI.
- ✓ ***Update the PAR*** **–** Once the SVI has been clarified or verified, the PAR can be slightly and NOT majorly modified. This is assumed that the whole team of assessors has diligently used the criteria to analyze and assess the performance based on the SSR and submitted evidence to a 95%degree of accuracy and validity previously and not re-working or re-checking evidence.

STEP 7: The last step is the finalization of the PAR, which will contain the Key Theme (summarized most significant to the program" of its Strengths and Opportunities for Improvements, the detailed Value-added comments for each of its Standard and its performance. The value-added comments should meet the criteria of the 4 "A" of Accurate, Aligned, Actionable, and Appropriate within the context of the HEI or program.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper has tried to demonstrate the assessment process as part of the accreditation of an HEI, college, or program as seen from the "lens of the assessor". It illustrates the fact that the "assessment mindset" of the assessors' constitution is more focused and scientific and research-oriented than one believes. This paper has attempted to demystify the understanding of the assessors' mindset in the discourse of (a) what and how the assessor perform their assessment work; (b) what tools of Deming Cycle PDCA or Performance Excellence process ADLI & results LeTCI focused evaluative factors are; and most importantly, (c) what and how the assessor's critical and analytical frame of mind formulates their audit rails and assessment methodologies.

This means that the better the understanding of "what and how" the assessor sets their frame of mind or mindset in assessment, the better that one can re-frame or re-construe the self-study as a research-oriented approach. This will strengthen the fundamentals of what a self-study should be. This calls for analyzing oneself objectively with an integrated evidence-based approach that drives the whole entity towards the same directional strategic or operational goals. It underscores the importance of informed decision making of the "management through measurement or by the fact" which is provided by the independent third party objective assessment and value-added comments of the assessors.

Appendix 1: Relevant Questions of the 5 "W"s and 1 "H" guiding systematic assessment

Key Assessment Questions	Types of Questions based on the 5 "W"s and 1 "H" to ensure performance and its measurement:
How well do learners achieve?	**WHAT and HOW do the Learners' achievements implemented and CHECKED for:** ▪ completion formal qualifications ▪ acquisition useful skills and knowledge and develop their cognitive abilities ▪ improvements in their well-being and enhance their abilities and attributes. ▪ Graduates employment, engagement with further study, and/or contributing to their local and wider communities
What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?	**WHAT and HOW to develop and implement PLANS, ACT on them and CHECK for the performance of:** ▪ Knowledge creation and dissemination ▪ Community development supported ▪ School or Program active engagement with communities • Relevant groups clear identifications and appropriate and ongoing engagement ▪ Relevant groups developments, barriers, and possibilities ▪ Effective engagement encouragement at all levels in the School or Program.
How well do programs and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?	**WHAT and HOW the Program design is reviewed and CHECKED regularly to:** ▪ incorporate ongoing needs analysis ▪ maintain relevance to interested groups and communities ▪ reflect changes in subject content ▪ incorporate relevant teaching practice and technologies ▪ ensure resources are adequate and appropriate.
How effective is the teaching?	**WHAT and HOW effective Learning is effected and CHECKED through:** ▪ environments that are planned and structured for the benefit and needs of learners ▪ activities reflecting the needs of, and engage learners ▪ activities providing opportunities for learners to apply knowledge and skills in a range of relevant contexts ▪ assessment processes that are valid, sufficient, fair, and transparent and which provide learners and teachers with useful feedback on progress.
How well are learners guided and supported?	**WHAT and HOW Learners' services and support that:** ▪ are provided with comprehensive and timely study information and advice ▪ are provided with continued support to assist them to achieve their goals ▪ experience an appropriate range of responses to their well-being needs ▪ experience an inclusive learning environment and teachers relate effectively ▪ experience minimal barriers to learning.
How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?	**WHAT Governance and HOW the Governance supporting educational achievements with CHECKS in place to guide the senior managers and governors of the School or Program to:** ▪ anticipate and respond to change ▪ use results of self-assessment constructively for improvement ▪ balance innovation and continuity ▪ establish a clear organizational purpose and direction ▪ provide effective leadership ▪ allocate resources to support learning, teaching, and research ▪ ensure all policies and practices are legal and ethical ▪ value their staff and put in place appropriate and effective processes for their recruitment and development.

Appendix 2: Samples of Proposed Key Assessment Questions

The proposed Key assessment questions (KAQs) can be adapted as the main tools of external evaluation and review. Along with performance criteria, these tools are used to reach judgments about educational performance and capability in the whole assessment. The assessment has two focuses the "PROCESS and RESULTS". For the Results, some of the Outcome questions focus on the value of the outcomes achieved in school or program.

1. **How well do learners achieve?**

Possible sources of evidence	• Learner achievement data (retentions, completions, etc.) • Destination data • Feedback from learners, staff, and other interested communities or individuals • Outcome information
Relevant sets of Key Performance Indicators	• Outcomes for learners and communities • Fostering effective learning environments • Minimizing Barriers to learning • Managing change strategically • Assessment supports learning • Organizational purpose and direction

2. **What is the value of the outcomes for key stakeholders, including learners?**

For the Process Criteria, the Process questions focus on the quality and value of the key contributing processes in school or program of which some of the key processes are:

Possible sources of evidence	• analysis of stakeholders feedback and graduate data • graduate satisfaction feedback • graduate outcome information • employment or destination of graduate data • analysis of sector benchmarking information
Relevant sets of Key Performance Indicators	• Assessment of supports of learning • Outcomes for learners and communities • Engaging with communities • Providing relevant programs • Managing change

3. **How well do programs and activities match the needs of learners and other stakeholders?**

Possible sources of evidence	• Results of analysis of stakeholder feedback • Entry requirements for courses and programs • Employer feedback on graduates • Feedback from graduates in employment • Learner achievement information (trends over time)
Relevant sets of Key Performance Indicators	• Minimizing Barriers to learning • Assessment supports learning • Engaging with communities • Providing relevant programs • Managing change strategically • Organizational purpose and direction

4. How effective is the teaching?

Possible sources of evidence	• Learner feedback on teaching • Results of peer observation of teaching • Feedback from stakeholders • Interviews with staff and learners • Teaching and learning plans
Relevant sets of Key Performance Indicators	• Fostering effective learning environments • Minimizing Barriers to learning • Assessment supports learning • Managing change strategically

5. How well are learners guided and supported?

Possible sources of evidence	• Learner feedback on the learning environment • Feedback on learner support services • Analysis of information on non-completion rates (attritions) • Learner destination data • Learner and staff opinion
Relevant sets of Key Performance Indicators	• Facilitating learning pathways • Assessment supports learning • Fostering effective learning environments

6. How effective are governance and management in supporting educational achievement?

Possible sources of evidence	• Reports, minutes, and records of the activities of the governance body • Records and reports of consultation e.g. with communities, employers, management • Strategic and business plans with evidence of the approach to meeting identified needs and aspirations
Relevant sets of Key Performance Indicators	• Engaging with communities and stakeholders • Managing change strategically • Organizational purpose and direction • Engagement with the faculty and staff, their development and growth

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