

Institutional Effectiveness and TracDat Plans

Common Myths in Administrative Units

“I made a recommendation on my IE plan in the past, and I am forced to implement it.”

Unit owners feel that if they have made a past recommendation for their IE plan, they are forced to follow it regardless of what occurs after the recommendation. **FACT:** Units can choose to not implement recommendations due to a change in directives, personnel, leadership, etc., as long as a description of the decision/action is posted in the annual “Follow up” section in TracDat.

“I have to keep my current outcomes, assessments and criterion statements for 5 years. I am not allowed to change them.”

Administrative units function in a dynamic environment that can be unpredictable. **FACT:** Units have the flexibility to shift their IE plan as situations arise or new improvements are needed. The plans should represent the outcomes of the unit. Changing leadership and demands may call for a shift in outcomes, and the plans can reflect those changes as long as reasons are provided. Outdated outcomes can be “completed” in TracDat and new outcomes opened as “active” as long as reasons are documented for the change within TracDat “Recommendations”. The Office of University Accreditation recommends that there should be some continuity in outcomes from year to year for comparisons.

“If I meet my criteria statement year after year, I have to find a new outcome and assessment method”.

FACT: If an outcome continually meets the criterion statement, units have the option to: 1.) increase the criterion statement (raise the bar), 2.) implement a more reliable assessment method, 3) close the outcome and find a new outcome to measure improvements.

“I have to have a 100 on my IE plan each year.”

FACT: To be compliant with annual Institutional Effectiveness planning, units must score an overall average of 70 or above on their peer reviewed rubric.

“It is a problem if I don’t meet my criterion each year.”

FACT: Units should have a justification on how the criterion standard has been selected. This should be an aspirational, quantitative measurement. SACSCOC is less concerned that the criterion standard is met annually, and more concerned on a unit’s ability to demonstrate continuous improvement. Your IE plan demonstrates the unit’s ability to take action where improvement is needed. Meeting a low standard each year does not demonstrate this ability.

“I don’t understand why this outcome or criterion statement has been set for my office, or we don’t do this anymore. It doesn’t make sense to me, but I have been told I can’t change it.”

FACT: Units have the flexibility to shift their IE plan as situations arise or new outcomes are needed. The plans should represent the current outcomes of the unit related to its mission and span of control. The outcomes, assessment and criterion should be based on data that is meaningful to the unit to make data-informed decisions on improvement.

“I need to have all of my expected unit outcomes in TracDat.”

FACT: Institutional Effectiveness peer reviewers only review three active outcomes each year. Units are only required to keep three active outcomes in TracDat annually.

“I was told what areas I had to assess and that I had to use a Qualtrics survey, but I would like to focus on some other areas or use another method.”

FACT: Units choose what areas they want to assess to demonstrate continuous improvement. The outcomes should be meaningful and directly related to their unit’s mission and span of control. The Office of University Accreditation can assist units in wording outcomes statements or designing assessment methods, but the office does not direct what has to be assessed. The unit decides the best assessment(s) for deriving the meaningful data needed to evaluate success towards meeting the outcome. Qualtrics is a good platform for conducting surveys, but there is no requirement to use a Qualtrics survey to collect data.