



Responding Meaningfully to the *Principles of Accreditation*

Diane M. Calhoun-French, PhD (Jefferson Community and
Technical College)

Steven M. Sheeley, PhD (SACSCOC)



Topics

- Off-Site Committee (Compliance Certification)
- On-Site Committee (Focused Report/QEP)
- BOT/C&R (Response to Recommendations)
- BOT/C&R (Monitoring)
- Some common pitfalls
- QA

Just so you know....

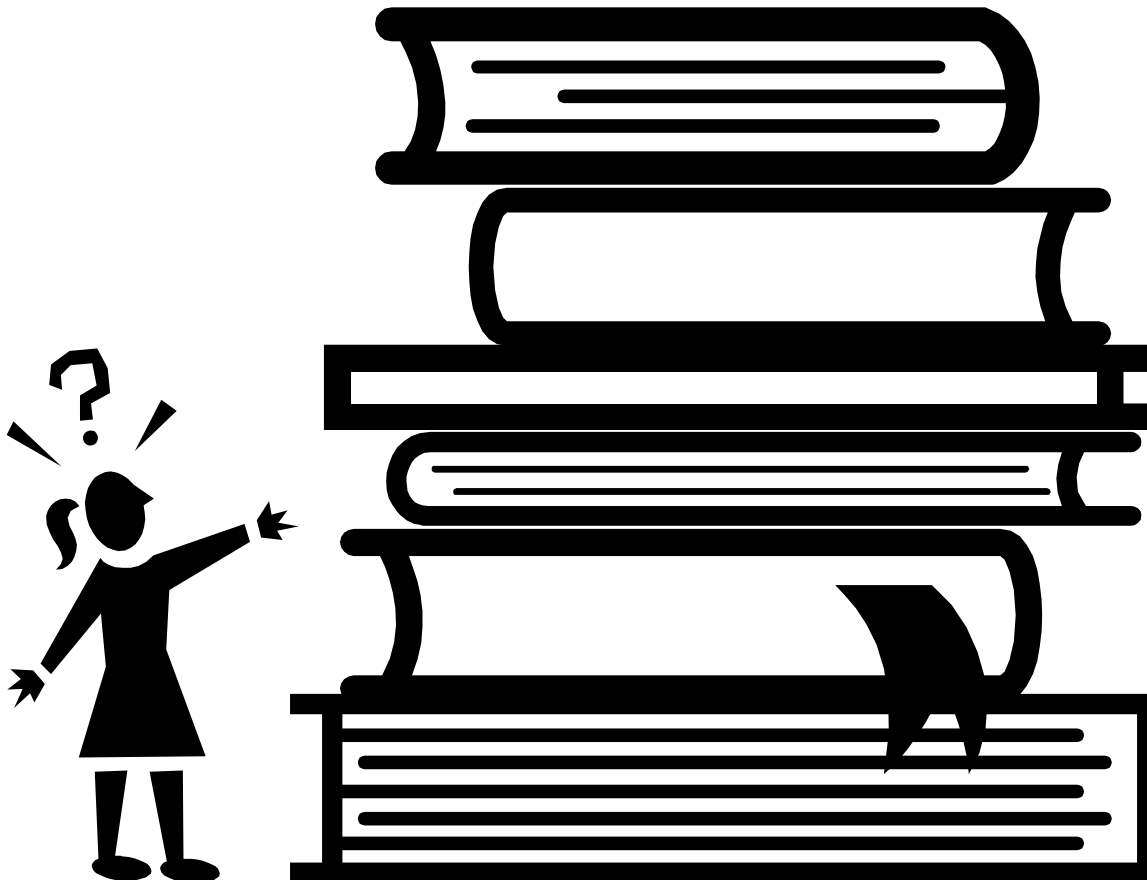
- Distance education
- Off-Campus Site(s)
- Standards, policies, and guidelines
- Standards that require a policy
 - Approved
 - Published
 - Implemented (CS 3.2.3, 3.2.5, 3.7.5; FR 4.5)



Compliance Certification

- Sent to Off-Site Committee dealing with at least three institutions in the “cluster”
- Information and instructions from Crystal Baird in Carol Luthman’s office
- Report sent to members of committee
- Preliminary work done before meeting in Atlanta

Think like the reviewer!





Some Sound Practices

- Don't wait until orientation in Atlanta to begin
- Provide clear and sufficient documentation, including examples
- The burden of persuasion lies with the institution, not the reviewer
- Read the standards carefully
- Assessment is woven throughout the *Principles*
- Don't be afraid to ask....

Consider Potential “Traps”

- CR 2.8 (Faculty) – “ensure quality and integrity of programs”
- Institutional Effectiveness (CR 2.5, CS 3.3.1 [1-5], CS 3.5.1)
- Watch your audit timing (most recent FY)
- CS 3.12.1 (Substantive Change)
- Are you Level II?

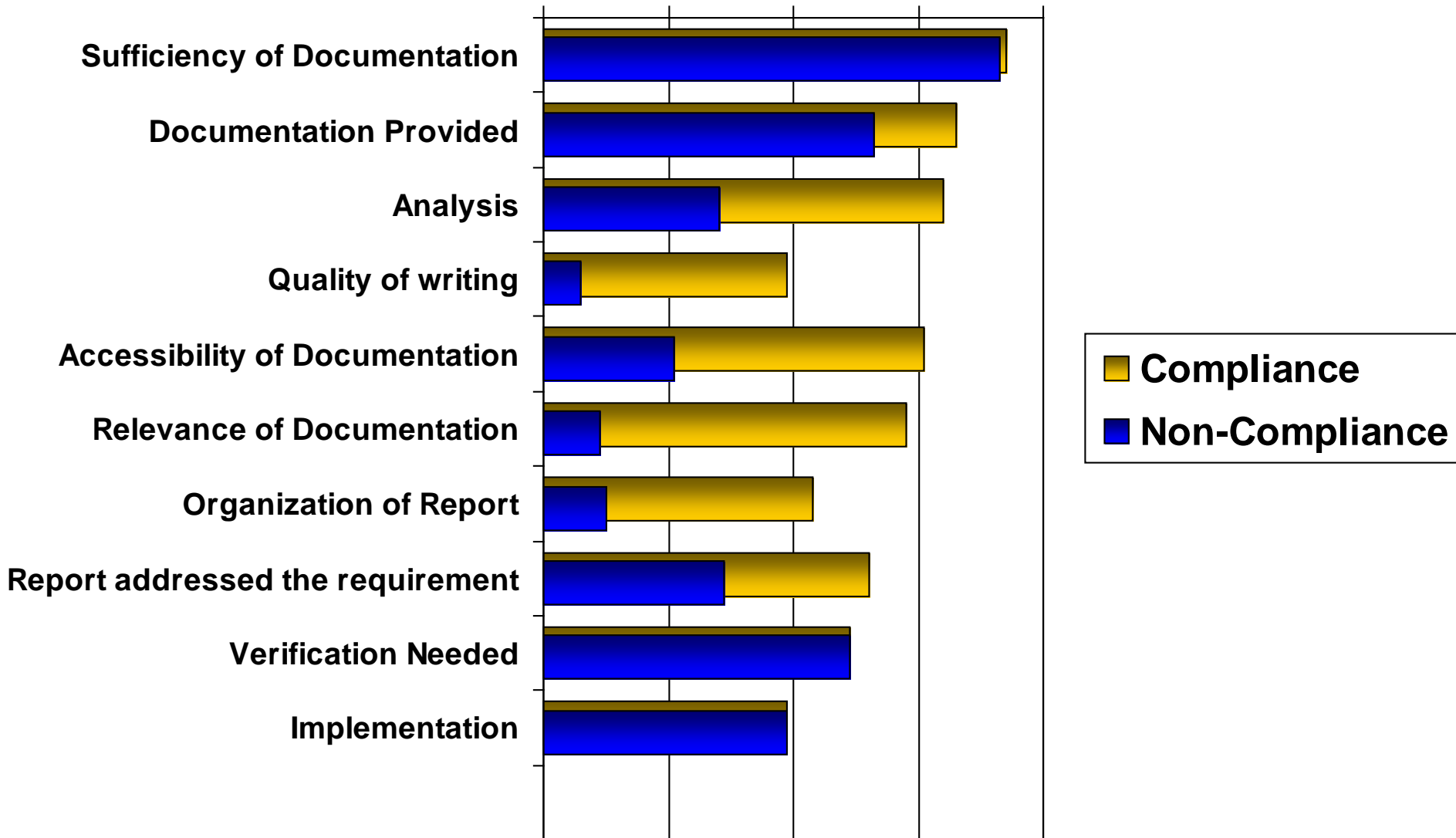
Common Problems

- Technology and Murphy's "Law"
 - Links don't work
 - Nothing works
- Too little analysis/persuasive "argument"
- Insufficient/misleading documentation
- "Dueling" narratives
- Didn't understand/address the language of the standard

Recurring General Reasons for Compliance Decisions

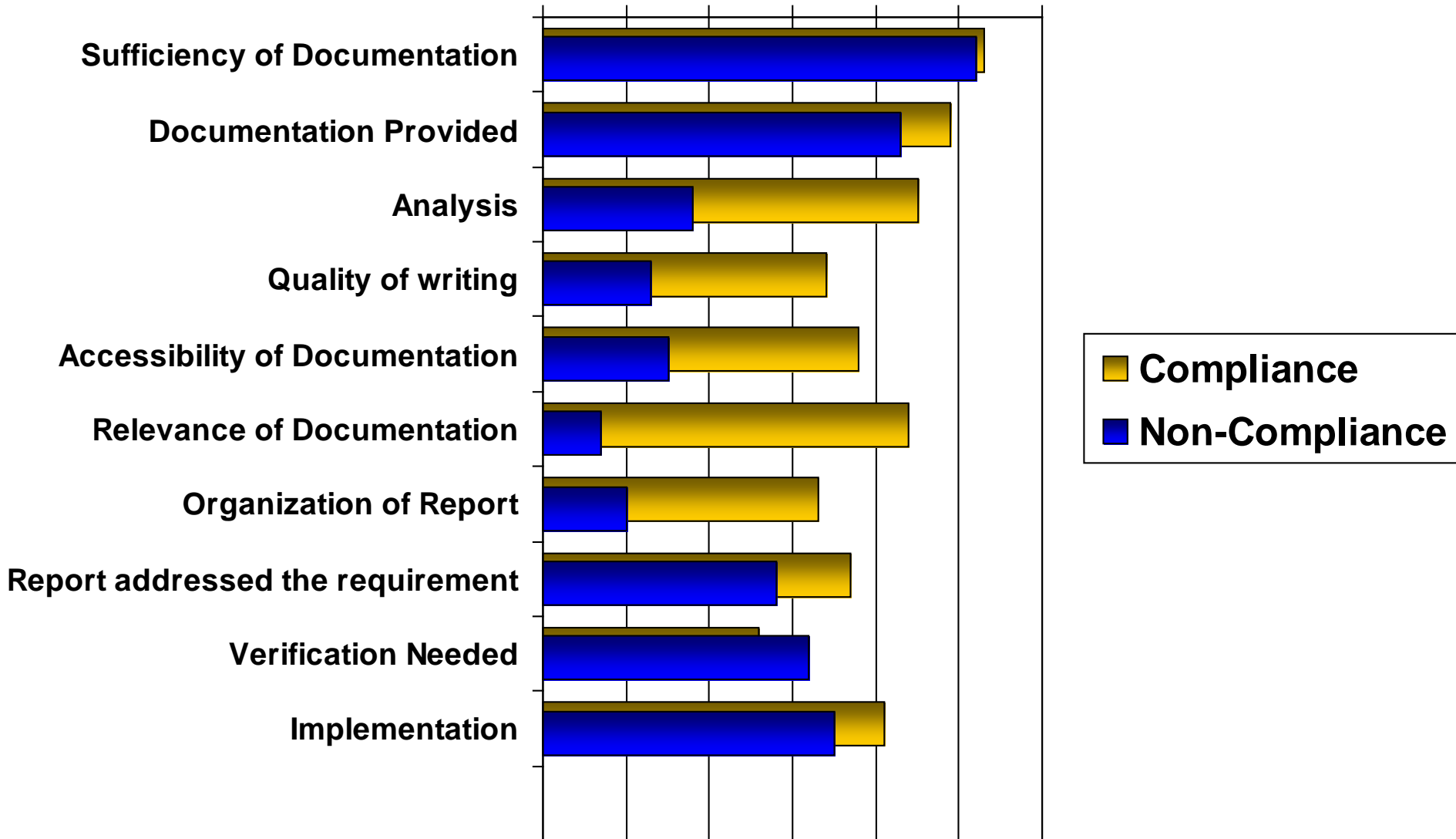
Spring 2008 Off-Site Committees (N=89)

0 20 40 60 80



Recurring General Reasons for Compliance Decisions Fall 2008 Off-Site Committees (N=62)

0 10 20 30 40 50 60



General Comments - Off-Site: Spring 2008

- Institutions need to make their best case clearly – the reviewer should not have to dig for information outside the documentation provided for a given response.
- Validation of "institutional effectiveness" was the most challenging area for our committee and seemingly others – more or better information regarding documentation needs should be reinforced in this area.
- I believe all schools should be advised to place a link to their accreditation documents on their homepage. Trying to find and access the sites, particularly when the electronic devices the school provided, didn't work and in my case, shut my computer down, was frustrating.

General Comments - Off-Site: Spring 2008

- Actual analysis supported by documentation (and evidence of implementation) was crucial. We really were not prepared to second guess where the analysis was garbled, or evidence was not presented.
- The institutions which responded directly and forthrightly to the standards, and provided easy access to their documents, helped themselves greatly in this process.
- Well-crafted, concise narrative with consistent documentation makes the best case of an institution. Some provided way too much information without really making the case

General Comments - Off-Site: Fall 2008

- Nothing is more frustrating than having to wade through documents without a table of contents or sense of organization. I would add, the most prevalent issue is the lack of documentation of assessment – the evidence that they are doing what they say they do and are assessing the processes/curricula/personnel/services. That's the name of the game and it is surprising how many institutions still don't get it!
- Since there were 3 schools in my cluster, the quality really varied: the [first] needed the most editorial help. . . . The second school's report was better but still obviously written by a committee with its overall quality greatly varying: it really needed one editor to clean up and ensure continuity of quality. The third report was exemplary in all respects.
- All organizations organized their actual reports well, following the specified formats. However, it was the organization of their documentation and supporting materials that was often lacking.



Off-Site Committee Report

- Preliminary findings
 - Compliance
 - Non-Compliance
- Forms basis of Final Reaffirmation Report
- Sent to institution and On-Site Committee....

Focused Report

- “Second Chance” at establishing compliance
- Goal: to achieve compliance **prior** to Off-Site Visit
 - Fixing
 - Clarifying
 - Providing missing information
 - Providing additional information
 - Highlighting significant information
 - Connecting the dots



Characteristics of Effective SACS Narratives

- Direct response to *Principle*
- Clarity
- Specificity
- Completeness
- Sufficiency
- Consistency
- Readability

QEP

- Keep the focus on the central question:

“What will students know or be able to do that they don’t know or aren’t able to do now?”



QEP “Gators”




- Is the scope right?
- Is it REALLY about student learning?
- Do we have the resources of all kinds to get it done successfully?
- Is it integrated with everything else we do?



Most Frequent QEP Recommendations

- **Confusion of process and product**
- **Inconsistent terminology**
- **Lack of sufficient detail to determine resource needs**

- 
- Can't demonstrate that actions undertaken lead to student learning outcomes (can't connect the dots)
 - No clear locus of accountability
 - Assessment instrument doesn't clearly measure what is to be assessed
 - Planning or implementation doesn't involve all the right people



Response to Off-Site Report

- “Third Chance” at establishing compliance with all principles, including the ones related to QEP
- Goal: to achieve recommendation of compliance **prior** to C&R Review, i.e., to be deemed “in compliance” by On-Site Chair



Successful Response Documents

- **Demonstrate clearly that institution understands why it was deemed out of compliance (restatement of issue)**
- **Demonstrate that it understands what compliance entails**
- **Either fixes, clarifies, provides missing or additional information, highlights significant information, and/or connects dots**

Monitoring Reports

- Know your audience
- Demonstrate compliance with specific standards in question
 - Address concerns of BOT in action letter
 - Avoid future tense
 - Narrative + documentation
- Follow instructions that come with official action letter
- Results....

Trends: 2006-2008

Off-Site (non-compliance)	On-Site (recommendation)	C&R (monitoring)
CS 3.7.1 (faculty competence)	CR 2.12 (QEP)	CS 3.3.1 (IE)/CS 3.5.1 (college-level competencies)
CS 3.5.1 (college-level competencies)	CS 3.5.1 (college-level competencies)	
CS 3.3.1 (IE)	CS 3.3.1 (IE)	CR 2.12 (QEP)
CS 3.2.10 (administrative staff evaluations)/CR 2.11.1 (financial resources)	CS 3.7.1 (faculty competence)	CS 3.7.1 (faculty competence)
	CR 2.12 (Core Requirement)	CS 3.5.4 (terminal degrees of faculty)/CS 3.4.1 (program approval)
CS 3.7.2 (faculty evaluations)	CS 3.4.1 (program approval)	
CS 3.4.11 (academic program coordination)	CS 3.5.4 (terminal degrees of faculty)	CS 3.8.1 (library/learning resources)/CS 3.10.1 (financial stability)
FR 4.5 (student complaints)/CS 3.10.4 (control of finances)	CR 2.5 (planning and IE)	
	CS 3.8.3 (qualified library staff)/CS 3.7.2 (faculty evaluations)/CS 3.12.1 (Substantive change)	
CS 3.5.4 (terminal degrees of faculty)/CS 3.11.3 (physical facilities)/CS 3.4.7 (consortia/contract)		

Danger Zones (C&R monitoring)

Standard	2006	2007	2008
CS 3.3.1 (IE)	17%	36%	36%
CS 3.5.1 (college-level competencies)	26%	31%	28%
CR 2.12 (QEP)	25%	22%	16%
CS 3.7.1 (faculty competence)	9%	7%	14%
CS 3.5.4 (terminal degrees of faculty)	NA	4%	9%
CS 3.4.1 (program approval)	13%	3%	NA
CS 3.8.1 (library/learning resources)	NA	7%	NA
CS 3.10.1 (financial stability)	7%	7%	4%

Questions?



If we can help...

Diane M. Calhoun-French

Provost & Vice President for Academic and
Student Affairs

Jefferson Community and Technical College

502-213-2621

diane.calhoun-french@kctcs.edu



Steven M. Sheeley

Vice President

SACSCOC

404-679-4501, ext. 4584

ssheeley@sacscoc.org