

Guidelines for Interpreting and Scoring Benchmarks

2.4: *The school's Catholic identity requires excellence in academic and intellectual formation in all subjects including religious education.*

I. What does this benchmark indicate for school performance?

This benchmark indicates that every student's learning experience provided by the school, including religious education, must promote excellence in academic and intellectual formation, both of which are constituent elements of its Catholic identity.

II. As a review team member, what evidence do I look for?

The following questions should assist in framing this item:

- Does the school's mission statement philosophy clearly state that the school is committed to academic excellence?
- Does the curriculum guide indicate the anticipated outcomes for all subjects at all levels? Are these outcomes in line with established norms for academic excellence? Is the religion department held to these norms?
- Do student assessments in various forms demonstrate competency in communication, creativity, collaboration and critical thinking?
- Do grading policies and rubrics indicate the academic rigor of the religious and non-religious academic programs?
- Does the Professional Development Plan for the faculty contain a growth trajectory committed to academic excellence? Is the religion faculty held to these standards?
- Is there evidence that the school actively attempts to integrate faith, culture and life through its academic programs? For example, do teachers share ideas and evaluate attempts to integrate faith, culture, and life on a timely basis?

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III. What are the key differences between the levels of the rubric?

At level **3- Fully Meets Benchmark,**

the school provides evidence of its commitment to student excellence by clearly articulating standards and expectations in all disciplines. This commitment extends to the faculty professional development program as well.

At level **4-Exceeds Benchmark,**

the school demonstrates a sustained commitment to academic excellence and innovative academic growth throughout all its programs. The entire curriculum integrates faith, culture, and life effectively for students in tangible, measurable ways.

At level **2-Partially Meets Benchmark,**

the school demonstrates some standards and expectations of academic excellence for its students and faculty.

At level **1-Does Not Meet Benchmark,**

the school does not present evidence that attention is given to excellence in academic and intellectual formation in all subjects, including religion for students.

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IV. What are some key suggestions for improvement?

To move from level 1 to level 2,

- Establish a curriculum policy requiring measurable academic and intellectual formation of students be evident in all subjects, including religion.
- Provide appropriate professional development opportunities to assist faculty in achieving these goals.

To move from level 2 to level 3,

- Develop and implement clearly articulated standards and measurements of student progress.
- Develop performance expectations that demonstrate academic and intellectual achievement in all subjects including religion.

To move from level 3 to 4,

- Demonstrate student mastery and success through multiple measures.
- Demonstrate student understanding of the integrated nature of faith, culture and life.

V. What are key terms for understanding? (Refer to NSBECS Glossary for terms listed below.)