

Academic Execution Admissibility: A Governance-First Model for Institutional Assessment and Accreditation

A Foundational Framework for Governance-Controlled Academic Execution

Abstract

Higher education institutions are held accountable for outcomes derived from processes they do not structurally control.

Assessment—the foundational unit of academic evidence—is routinely created, deployed, and evaluated without enforced governance at the point of origin. As a result, institutions rely on retrospective reconstruction to defend outcomes that were never formally validated prior to execution.

This paper introduces Academic Execution Admissibility, a governance-first control model in which academic actions—specifically assessment creation, deployment, evaluation, and interpretation—are considered valid only when authorized through defined institutional governance structures. These structures incorporate curriculum, accreditation standards, regulatory requirements, licensure frameworks, and other governing academic constraints.

The model establishes a structural separation between academic intent, governance authority, and academic execution, ensuring that no assessment-derived evidence exists without prior validation of alignment, sequencing, cognitive rigor, and compliance.

By embedding governance at the point of origin, this framework transforms assessment from a retrospective reporting exercise into a continuous, auditable, and institutionally defensible system of record.

### 1. The Structural Problem: Ungoverned Academic Execution

Across higher education, institutions are held accountable for outcomes they cannot reliably defend.

### **Accreditation bodies, licensing agencies, governing boards, and the public expect institutions to demonstrate:**

alignment between curriculum and assessment

appropriate cognitive rigor

evidence of student learning

documented improvement cycles

compliance with accreditation and regulatory requirements

### **Yet the foundational unit of this evidence—the assessment item—is typically created:**

independently by faculty or subject matter experts

externally through publisher-developed or platform-integrated assessment content

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without enforced alignment to institutional curriculum or governing frameworks

without consistent cognitive-level designation

without durable documentation of decision-making

As a result, institutions rely on retrospective reconstruction to justify outcomes that were never governed at the point of origin.

### **This results in a structural contradiction:**

Institutions are judged on outcomes derived from processes that were never formally controlled.

This is not a tooling problem. It is a governance failure at the execution level.

## 2. The Control Gap: Execution Without Authority

### **Most academic systems operate under an implicit assumption:**

If an assessment exists and is delivered, it is valid.

This assumption is false.

### **In practice:**

assessments may be misaligned

sequencing may be violated

cognitive rigor may be inconsistent

accreditation requirements may not be met

regulatory expectations may not be satisfied

external assessment sources may not reflect institutional intent

documentation may be absent

### **Yet once executed, these assessments produce:**

grades

analytics

reports

accreditation artifacts

### **This produces a condition in which:**

Academic execution occurs prior to governance validation.

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Governance becomes retrospective and advisory rather than authoritative and structural.

### **The result is a conditional academic system:**

execution is possible without prior authority

evidence exists without guaranteed validity

compliance is assumed rather than enforced

institutional risk is embedded in normal operations

Academic systems do not fail because they lack data. They fail because they allow execution before authority.

### 3. Academic Execution Admissibility

#### Definition

Academic Execution Admissibility is the condition under which an academic action—specifically assessment creation, deployment, evaluation, or interpretation—is permitted to produce valid institutional evidence.

### **An academic action is admissible only if it has been authorized through governance structures that verify:**

alignment to defined learning objectives

consistency with curriculum sequence and applicable accreditation, regulatory, and governing frameworks

appropriate cognitive rigor

documented academic approval by designated human authorities

#### Core Principle

Academic execution is not inherently valid. It becomes valid only through governance authorization.

#### Implication

### **This reframes assessment from:**

content creation to

governed execution

### **And from:**

post hoc validation to

pre-execution admissibility

### 4. Invariants of Governed Academic Systems

#### **A system operating under Academic Execution Admissibility must satisfy the following conditions:**

Assessment items do not constitute valid academic evidence unless governance-authorized.

Execution of assessment without prior alignment to curriculum, objectives, and governing frameworks is structurally invalid.

Post hoc justification does not convert invalid assessment into valid evidence.

Cognitive rigor must be defined prior to assessment execution, not inferred after performance.

Assessment sequencing must reflect instructional sequencing and governing constraints or is inadmissible.

AI-generated or assisted content has no academic authority until human governance approval is recorded.

Approval by designated human authorities, including faculty or subject matter experts, is the binding mechanism for execution.

All assessments must produce traceable artifacts linking outcomes to objectives, curriculum, and governing frameworks.

Student performance data is only as valid as the governance of the assessment that produced it.

Accreditation and regulatory evidence must be generated continuously at the point of origin, not reconstructed.

Institutional memory must be artifact-based, not dependent on personnel.

Systems that allow execution prior to governance are conditional and non-defensible.

These invariants establish governance not as a policy layer, but as a precondition for execution.

### 5. Governance-First Academic Architecture

Academic Execution Admissibility requires a structural separation of responsibilities.

Layer 1 — Academic Intent

curriculum structures

learning objectives

instructional design

accreditation standards and guidelines

regulatory requirements and statutes

licensure frameworks and competency models

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This layer defines what should be taught and assessed.

### Layer 2 — Governance Authority

alignment validation

cognitive classification

sequencing enforcement

accreditation and regulatory mapping

faculty or subject matter expert approval workflows

audit logging and version control

This layer determines whether a proposed academic action is admissible.

### Layer 3 — Academic Execution

assessment deployment

student interaction

grading and outcomes

reporting and analytics

generation of institutional evidence artifacts

This layer produces institutional evidence—but only after governance authorization.

### Architectural Rule

No academic execution occurs outside governance authorization.

## 6. The Academic Execution Lifecycle

### **Within a governed system, academic actions follow a deterministic lifecycle:**

**Proposal** An assessment item is generated (human or AI-assisted).

**Constraint Binding** The item is aligned to curriculum, objectives, cognitive level, and governing frameworks, including accreditation and regulatory requirements.

**Governance Evaluation** Authorized personnel evaluate alignment, sequencing, rigor, and compliance.

**Authorization Approval** is recorded, establishing admissibility.

**Execution** The assessment is deployed to learners.

**Artifact Creation** Performance data and associated metadata are captured as structured evidence.

**Traceability and Reuse** Artifacts are retained and reused for analysis, reporting, and accreditation.

**This lifecycle ensures that:**

Execution follows governance—not the reverse.

7. Implications for Accreditation and Institutional Effectiveness

**Accreditation systems assume that institutional evidence is:**

valid

aligned

compliant

representative

Under current conditions, this assumption is frequently unverifiable.

**Academic Execution Admissibility resolves this by:**

embedding alignment and compliance at creation

preserving governance decision-making artifacts

enabling continuous documentation

eliminating reliance on retrospective narratives

**This shifts institutions from:**

reactive compliance to

proactive, continuous evidence generation

8. Implications for AI in Academic Systems

The integration of AI into academic systems introduces both efficiency and risk.

**Without governance:**

AI accelerates inconsistency

misalignment scales rapidly

compliance gaps expand

accountability weakens

**Under Academic Execution Admissibility:**

AI is restricted to proposal generation

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governance determines admissibility

human authorities retain execution control

### **This ensures that:**

AI increases speed without acquiring authority.

### 9. Institutional Impact

### **A governance-first model produces measurable institutional effects:**

reduced accreditation and regulatory risk

increased audit defensibility

earlier identification of learning gaps

decreased reliance on manual reconstruction

preservation of institutional knowledge

improved consistency across internally and externally sourced assessments

### **Over time, the system becomes:**

the authoritative record of how academic evidence is created, validated, and governed.

### 10. Conclusion

Higher education operates within decentralized systems that prioritize autonomy, shared governance, and peer review. However, these systems have historically lacked enforceable control over how academic evidence is created.

### **Academic Execution Admissibility introduces a model in which:**

governance precedes execution

authority determines validity

compliance is enforced at the point of origin

evidence is created intentionally, not reconstructed

Academic Execution Admissibility does not introduce new academic processes.

It enforces the ones institutions already claim to follow.

By making governance a precondition for execution, it transforms academic systems from conditionally defensible to structurally valid.