



Institutional Responsibilities in the Accreditation Process

(Version 061714)

Accreditation is the educational community's means of self-regulation through quality assurance and improvement. The accrediting process is intended to strengthen and sustain the quality and integrity of higher education, making it worthy of public confidence.

There are many ways in which institutions may affirm the value and realize the benefits of accreditation. The institution's commitment to quality and regard for accreditation fundamentals are reflected in many ways, including:

- **Integrity:** (*Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education*, Standard 6), including openness and access for the Commission and its evaluators and other representatives, as well as involvement of the institution's constituencies in the accreditation process. The Commission relies on the accuracy and completeness of the information supplied by the institution. The institution complies with Commission requirements relative to substantive institutional change. In the event that an institution fails to submit a required follow-up or other report, including the Institutional Profile, fails to respond to Commission requests for information or scheduling a visit, or has not submitted its dues within 12 months of the billing date, the institution will be considered to have voluntarily allowed its accreditation to lapse, and the Commission may take action in accordance with its "Range of Accreditation Actions." In regard to its students, the institution must ensure that program length is appropriate to the objective of the degrees or credentials offered.
- **Public Information:** provision of information regarding its evaluation visit and accreditation status, among other things (See Policy, "Public Communication in the Accreditation Process.")
- **Merging or Closing:** developing and following a teach-out plan if it merges or closes (See Policy, "Closing or Merging a Postsecondary Institution.")
- **Student Complaints:** The institution should provide written policy and procedures for students to submit complaints regarding relevant aspects of the academic and operational aspects of the institution. While many institutions provide separate policies for academic or harassment grievances, institutions should provide an opportunity to submit grievances regarding other aspects of the institution as well. The policy and procedures should be published and widely distributed. (See also policies, "Complaints Involving Member and Candidate Institutions" and "Third Party Comment.")
- **Involvement in the Self-Study:** The institution should involve a sufficient number of administrators, faculty, students, and trustees in the self-study process to represent the institutional constituencies. It may also choose to involve alumnae, alumni, and representatives of the local community. All constituencies should be apprised of self-

study activities and progress. The level of awareness of the self-study effort on a campus is an indication of the level of institutional commitment and integrity in the accreditation process. Institutions also should make its constituencies aware that the Commission makes available the opportunity to submit Third Party Comments regarding the institution's compliance with Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation. (See "Third Party Comment.")

- **Continuous Improvement:** Because accreditation is a continuous process, not an end result of a self-study or Periodic Review Report, an institution's responsibility to participate in the accrediting process and to improve persists throughout the ten-year accreditation cycle. See Standard 2, Planning, Resource Allocation, and Institutional Renewal; Standard 7, Institutional Assessment, and Standard 14, Assessment of Student Learning in Characteristics of Excellence and the Commission's handbook, Student Learning Assessment: Options and Resources.
- **Participation:** It is the institution's responsibility to find ways to participate actively in the accreditation processes. The Commission therefore expects institutions to participate in policy development; decision-making; task forces; service on visiting teams or as reviewers of PRR and substantive change reports; nominating, electing, and serving as Commissioners; and attending Commission conferences.
- **Federal and State Requirements:** Institutions are required to meet Federal government laws and regulations in order to be eligible to participate in Title IV and other student assistance programs, and they also may be required to meet certain state or local requirements in order to be licensed or eligible to operate as an institute of higher education. Some requirements for institutions involve the standards and policies of accreditation agencies, such as those relating to student loan default data, the results of financial or compliance audits, program reviews, and graduation and placement rates. Institutions also will cooperate with the Commission to enable the Commission to comply with state and federal laws and regulations applicable to the Commission.
 - The Commission regularly informs its member institutions, other accrediting agencies, and state agencies of the standards and eligibility criteria required by the Commission. The Commission, however, does not act as a clearinghouse for all state, federal, local, or other requirements. It is the responsibility of the institution, therefore, to be apprised of and comply with any criteria or standards that are required directly by federal, state, or local governments or by any other external organization. Information on these requirements can be obtained directly from the organizations with which the institution must establish or maintain working relations.

Number: P.1.2

Version: 061714

Approved: June 1978

Previously Issued:

Revisions: Feb 1994; Feb 1991; 1993; Feb 1996; Nov 2001; May, 20, 2012; June 17, 2014