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This Handbook presents a composite of information about the evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. It includes:

1. General information about accreditation, its nature, purposes and agencies involved;

2. *Eligibility Requirements* for Candidates for Accreditation and accredited higher education institutions;

3. Procedural guide outlining the Candidate for Accreditation process;

4. Procedural guide outlining the accreditation process;

5. Standards and related Policies;

6. Policies and guidelines relating to accreditation; and

7. Glossary of terminology used in accreditation.

The Commission routinely provides a complimentary copy of the *Accreditation Handbook* to both the chief executive officer and the accreditation liaison officer of accredited and candidate institutions. Institutions preparing for initial accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation are provided ten complimentary copies of the *Handbook*. Additional printed copies may be purchased at a rate of $10.00 per copy. Other individuals and organizations may purchase a printed version of the *Handbook* at a cost of $20.00 per copy. The cost of *Handbooks* shipped overseas is $25.00 per copy, prepaid. The *Handbook* is also available free of charge in electronic form on the Commission’s website (http://www.nwccu.org).
INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Preface

Accreditation is a process of recognizing educational institutions for performance, integrity, and quality that entitles them to the confidence of the educational community and the public. In the United States this recognition is extended largely through nongovernmental, voluntary institutional or professional associations that have responsibility for establishing criteria, visiting and evaluating institutions at their requests, and approving those institutions and programs that meet their criteria.

In American higher education, regional accreditation performs a number of important functions including the encouragement of efforts toward maximum educational effectiveness. The accrediting process requires institutions to examine their own goals, operations, and achievements. It then provides expert analysis by peer evaluators, and, later, commendations for accomplishments and recommendations for improvement from the accrediting body. Since the accreditation status of an institution is reviewed periodically, institutions are encouraged toward continued self-study and improvement.

Institutional accreditation is granted by a regional accrediting agency within a scope of authority approved by the U.S. Department of Education. Institutional accreditation applies to the college or university as a whole, not individual programs or units within the institution.

Specialized accreditation of certain professional schools and individual educational programs is granted by a number of national organizations, each representing a professional area such as business, law, engineering, or nursing. Though each of these organizations has its distinctive definitions of eligibility, criteria for accreditation, and operating procedures, accreditation by a specialized accrediting agency is one means of assuring quality of the accredited programs.

While the procedures of the regional accrediting bodies differ somewhat in detail to allow for regional variations, their rules of eligibility, basic policies, and levels of expectation are similar. Given these variations in detail, regional accreditation of higher education institutions is intended to:

1. foster excellence in higher education through the development of criteria and guidelines for assessing educational effectiveness;

2. encourage institutional improvement of educational endeavors through continuous self-study and evaluation;

3. ensure the educational community, the general public, and other agencies or organizations that an institution has clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives, has established conditions under which their achievement can reasonably be expected, appears in fact to be substantially accomplishing them, and is so organized, staffed, and supported that it can be expected to continue to do so; and

4. provide counsel and assistance to established and developing institutions.
Mission Statement

The mission of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) is to assure educational quality, enhance institutional effectiveness, and foster continuous improvement of colleges and universities in the Northwest region through analytical institutional self-assessment and critical peer review based upon evaluation criteria that are objectively and equitably applied to institutions with diverse missions, characteristics, and cultures.

Context

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is incorporated as a legally established, private 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation for the expressed purpose of accrediting higher education institutions in the seven-state Northwest region which includes Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington. It replaces the Commission on Colleges and Universities that was originally part of the Northwest Association of Schools and of Colleges and Universities, a voluntary, nongovernmental organization for the improvement of educational institutions founded in 1917. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities consists of twenty-four Commissioners, a chair, and the President who is ex-officio. Commissioners are elected for staggered three-year terms and serve without compensation. A majority of the Commissioners represents institutions accredited by the Commission; however, four Commissioners are public members and are not affiliated with member or candidate institutions.

The Commission normally meets twice a year but various committees meet more frequently to facilitate the Commission's work. Its day-to-day activities are conducted by the Commission's President and staff. The Commission regularly reviews its criteria for accreditation with leadership provided by the Commission's Executive Committee. (See Policy A-22 Review of Accreditation Criteria.)

Accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities means that an institution's own goals are soundly conceived, that its educational programs have been intelligently devised, that its purposes are being accomplished, and that the institution is so organized, staffed, and supported to merit confidence in the quality and effectiveness of the institution in achieving its mission.

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities recognizes and supports the diversity that exists among America's colleges and universities. Characteristics of its member and candidate institutions range from public to private; large to small; church-related to nondenominational; liberal arts to research to vocationally oriented; residential to commuter; and highly selective to open admission. In respecting that diversity, indicators of educational quality and institutional effectiveness cannot always be defined in absolute terms for all institutions. Therefore the Commission considers institutional missions and characteristics when evaluating institutions for accreditation.

The initial step in applying for accreditation with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is to seek recognition as a Candidate for Accreditation. While Candidacy does not ensure accreditation, it is a status of affiliation with the Commission that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation. The Accreditation Procedural Guide provides complete information on the Commission's accreditation process.

When granted, accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is not partial. It applies to the entire institution in operation at the time of the most recent comprehensive evaluation.
It indicates that the institution as a whole has been evaluated and has been found to be substantially achieving its mission. Further, it indicates that the institution meets the Commission’s expectations for compliance with the accreditation criteria. Institutional changes initiated subsequent to the most recent evaluation, which significantly alter the objectives, scope, or control, and/or establish instruction at a new geographic location are not automatically included in the institution’s accreditation and require the submission of a substantive change prospectus. (See Policy A-2 Substantive Change.)

The Commission requires that each member and candidate institution complete and file an annual report with the President of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Annual report forms are made available to member and candidate institutions in the spring. Information provided on the forms is reviewed carefully and enables the Commission to monitor significant institutional changes and trends.
Eligibility Requirements for Candidates for Accreditation and Accredited Higher Education Institutions

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities accepts applications from institutions that:

- are concerned predominantly with higher education;
- have characteristics commonly associated with higher education; and
- meet the Eligibility Requirements.

The principal programs of eligible institutions are degree related and built upon knowledge and competencies normally obtained by students through a completed high school program or its equivalent. Such programs are based on verifiable knowledge which has been subjected to examination by competent academic persons and by established practitioners of the arts, sciences, crafts, and professions. Although diversity of requirements is expected among candidate and member institutions, course and degree requirements of an applicant institution must also be congruent with those of the broader higher education community which the Commission represents.

Eligible institutions may properly offer programs or courses that the Commission would not define as higher learning (e.g., introductory courses in subjects that some students may have missed in high school and courses and special programs specifically constructed to assist students to be successful with college-level coursework), but these are offered in addition to the courses and programs relevant to their mission.

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities accredits institutions rather than specific programs. Another section of the Accreditation Handbook contains the nine detailed Standards and related Policies by which quality, effectiveness, accreditation, and candidacy are evaluated. These should not be confused with the following essential Eligibility Requirements that must be met when evaluating an institution’s Application for Consideration or when granting or continuing Candidacy, granting Initial Accreditation, and reaffirming Accreditation. Each Eligibility Requirement is an expected level of performance or pre-condition that relates to the Standard and/or Policy shown in parenthesis.

1. AUTHORITY
   The institution is authorized to operate and award degrees as a higher education institution by the appropriate governmental organization, agency, or controlling board as required by the jurisdiction or state in which it operates. (Standard Six - Governance and Administration; Standard 6.A - Governance System; Standard Indicator 6.A.1)

2. MISSION AND GOALS
   The institution’s mission is clearly defined and adopted by its governing board(s) consistent with its legal authorization, and is appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education. The institution's purpose is to serve the educational interests of its students and its principal programs lead to formal degrees. It devotes all, or substantially all, of its gross income to support its educational mission and goals. (Standard One - Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness)
3. INSTITUTIONAL INTEGRITY
   The institution is governed and administered with respect for the individual in a nondiscriminatory manner while responding to the educational needs and legitimate claims of the constituencies it serves, as determined by its chartered purposes and accredited status. (Standard Nine - Institutional Integrity)

4. GOVERNING BOARD
   The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution and for each unit within a multiple-unit institution to ensure that the institution's mission is being achieved. The governing board has at least five voting members, a majority of whom have no contractual, employment, or personal financial interest in the institution. (Standard Six - Governance and Administration; Standard 6.B - Governing Board)

5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
   The institution employs a chief executive officer who is appointed by the governing board and whose full-time responsibility is to the institution. In the instance of multiple-unit institutions, the governing board may delegate to its chief executive officer the authority to appoint the executive officer of an operationally separate institution. Neither the chief executive officer nor an executive officer may serve as the chair of the institution's governing board. (Standard Six - Governance and Administration; Standard 6.C - Leadership and Management; Commission Policy B-7 Evaluation and Accreditation of Multi-Unit Institutions)

6. ADMINISTRATION
   The institution provides the administrative and support services necessary to achieve its mission and meet its goals. (Standard Six - Governance and Administration; Standard 6.C - Leadership and Management)

7. FACULTY
   The institution employs a core of full-time, professionally qualified faculty. The faculty is adequate in number and qualifications to meet its obligations toward achievement of the institution's mission and goals. Faculty are involved in the formulation of institutional policy and participate in academic planning, curriculum development and review, student academic advising, institutional governance and are evaluated in a periodic and systematic manner. Faculty workloads reflect the mission and goals of the institution and the talents and competencies of faculty while allowing sufficient time and support for professional growth and renewal. (Standard Four - Faculty; Commission Policy 4.1 Faculty Evaluation)

8. EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
   The institution offers one or more educational programs leading to the associate degree or higher that are congruent with its mission; are based on a recognized field(s) of study; are of sufficient content and length; are effective in the use of library and information resources; and are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degree(s) offered. It provides a locus or environment in which the learning experience is enriched through faculty and student interaction. If the range of program(s) is so highly specialized that its professional or vocational specialty defines the institution's identity, it must demonstrate that it has candidacy or accreditation status from a specialized or national accrediting body which is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). (Standard Two - Educational Program and Its Effectiveness)
9. GENERAL EDUCATION AND RELATED INSTRUCTION
The institution's baccalaureate degree programs and/or academic or transfer associate degree programs require a substantial and coherent component of general education as a prerequisite to or an essential element of the programs offered. All other associate degree programs (e.g., applied, specialized, or technical) and programs of study of either 30 semester or 45 quarter credits or more for which certificates are granted, require at least six semester or nine quarter credits of related instruction or the equivalent. Bachelor and graduate degree programs also require a planned program of major specialization or concentration. (Standard Two - Educational Program and Its Effectiveness; Commission Policy 2.1 General Education/Related Instruction Requirements)

10. LIBRARY AND LEARNING RESOURCES
The institution provides library resources, technology and services for students and faculty appropriate for its mission and for all of its educational programs wherever located and however delivered. (Standard Five - Library and Information Resources)

11. ACADEMIC FREEDOM
The institution's faculty and students are free to examine and test all knowledge appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the academic/educational community in general. Regardless of institutional affiliation or sponsorship, the institution maintains an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom and independence exist. (Standard Four - Faculty; Commission Policy A-8 Principles and Practices Regarding Institutional Mission and Goals, Policies and Administration, c.(2))

12. STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
The institution identifies and publishes the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs of 30 semester or 45 quarter credits or more. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete their programs, no matter where or how they are offered, will achieve these outcomes. (Standard Two - Educational Program and Its Effectiveness; Standard 2.B - Educational Program Planning and Assessment; Commission Policy 2.2 Educational Assessment)

13. ADMISSIONS
The institution publishes its student admission policy which specifies the characteristics and qualifications appropriate for its programs, and it adheres to that policy in its admission procedures and practices. (Standard Three - Students)

14. PUBLIC INFORMATION
The institution publishes in its catalog or in other appropriate publications and/or electronic sources accurate and current information that describes purposes and objectives, admission requirements and procedures, academic rules and regulations directly affecting students, programs and courses, degree(s) offered and the degree(s) requirements, costs and refund policies, student rights and responsibilities including grievance procedures, academic credentials of faculty and administrators, and other items relative to attending the institution and withdrawing from it. (Standard Three - Students; Commission Policy 3.1 Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment and Representation of Accredited Status, Item A.3)

15. FINANCIAL RESOURCES
The institution verifies a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to achieve its mission and meet its goals within an annual balanced operating budget and manageable level of debt. (Standard Seven - Finance)
16. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
The institution's financial records are externally audited annually by an independent certified public accountant or on a regular schedule by a state audit agency. The audit must include an unqualified opinion on the financial statement. (Standard Seven - Finance)

17. INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS
The institution systematically applies clearly defined evaluation and planning procedures, assesses the extent to which it fulfills its mission and achieves its goals, and periodically publishes the results to its constituencies. (Standard One - Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness)

18. OPERATIONAL STATUS
The institution will have completed at least one year of its principal educational programs and is operational with students actively pursuing its degree programs at the time of the Commission evaluation for Candidate for Accreditation. (Standard Two - Educational Program and Its Effectiveness)

19. DISCLOSURE
The institution discloses to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities any and all such information as the Commission may require to carry out its evaluation and accreditation functions. (Standard Nine - Institutional Integrity)

20. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ACCREDITATION COMMISSION
The institution accepts the standards and related policies of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities and agrees to comply with these standards and policies as currently stated or as modified in accordance with Commission policy. Further, the institution agrees that the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities may, at its discretion, make known to any agency or members of the public that may request such information, the nature of any action, positive or negative, regarding its status with the Commission. The Commission treats institutional self-study reports and evaluation committee reports as confidential. The institution, however, may choose to release the documents. (Standard Nine - Institutional Integrity)

Approved 2000

Candidate for Accreditation

Introduction. Candidate for Accreditation status offers higher education institutions an opportunity to establish a formal, publicly recognized relationship with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Higher education institutions that meet the basic Eligibility Requirements, but are not regionally accredited, may apply for consideration by the Commission.

Candidate for Accreditation is an affiliated, non-accredited candidacy status relationship with the Commission. Only accredited institutions are members of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Candidacy status indicates that an institution is progressing toward accreditation. Attainment of affiliate Candidacy status does not ensure accreditation.

Attainment of Candidacy status is the outcome of approval by the Commission at two separate, sequential stages. These are: 1) Application for Consideration and 2) self-study and visit by an evaluation committee.
Application for Consideration: The initial step in applying for accreditation with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is to seek recognition as a Candidate for Accreditation. Only accredited institutions are members of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Candidate for Accreditation is a preaccredited affiliate status with the Commission. It is a status of recognition by the Commission that the institution meets the eligibility requirements and is progressing toward accreditation. It does not, however, imply or ensure eventual accreditation by the Commission.

At such time as the institution’s chief executive officer and governing board determine that the Eligibility Requirements are met, the chief executive officer may submit an Application for Consideration to the President. The Application for Consideration consists of a letter of application signed by the chief executive officer, an application fee of $2,500, and five printed copies and one electronic copy of the following documents:

1. Thorough written response to each Eligibility Requirement;
2. Plans for institutional development;
3. Current Catalog;
4. Current budget and audited financial statement; and
5. Articles of incorporation and bylaws, or charter if the institution is independent, and when appropriate, proof of state authority to operate within the state and grant degrees

The Commission uses the following procedure in reviewing an Application for Consideration:

1. The institution submits its Application for Consideration not later than sixty (60) days prior to a regularly scheduled Commission meeting.
2. Commission staff review and prepare an analysis of the Application.
3. The Application is placed on the agenda for the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting.
4. The institution is invited to send a representative(s) to appear before the Commission when the Application is considered.
5. Following the meeting, the institution is notified in writing of the Commission’s action.

If the Commission judges that the institution meets the conditions of eligibility, the institution’s chief executive officer is advised to proceed with an analytic self-study for Candidacy, and tentative dates for an evaluation committee onsite visit are set. The self-study report and evaluation for Candidacy are to be completed no earlier than one year and no later than three years following acceptance of the Application for Consideration. If the self-study is not completed within three years of the date of acceptance of the Application for Consideration, approval of the institution’s Application for Consideration will be withdrawn.

Self-Study and Evaluation Committee Visit for Candidacy. The institution is to prepare a comprehensive analytical self-study appropriate to the stage of institutional development. Attention is directed to the Standards and Guide for Self-Study section of this Handbook. Although a Candidate for Accreditation institution will not be expected to have the maturity and stability of an accredited institution, the Standards and Guide for Self-Study provide a good basis for the institution to show how it is organized, staffed, and supported to accomplish its purposes and to demonstrate its potential for attaining accreditation within five years.
Evaluation Committee Visit. After the self-study is submitted, which may not be earlier than one year or later than three years after the acceptance of the institution’s Application for Consideration for candidacy, an onsite evaluation visit is conducted. The self-study report is to be submitted at least four to six weeks prior to the visit. An electronic copy and printed copies of the self-study are to be mailed from the institution to the Commission office and to members of the evaluation committee. The size of the evaluation committee will be determined by the size and complexity of the institution. The charge for a candidate evaluation visit is $1,200 per evaluator. The Commission reserves the right to adjust the evaluation fee to fit unusual circumstances associated with the visit.

The Commission receives copies of the institutional self-study and the report of the evaluation committee. The reports are discussed with the evaluation committee chair and the chief executive officer of the institution during Commission meetings.

Commission Procedures. The Commission relies heavily upon the report of the evaluation committee in determining whether or not the institution:

1. appears organized, staffed, and supported to offer the educational programs and services as published in the catalog; and
2. appears to have the potential for meeting enrollment projections and for achieving institutional stability in order to qualify for accreditation within five years.

In arriving at a decision on candidacy, the Commission, either at a regular meeting in summer or winter or at a special meeting:

1. reviews the self-study and other institutional documents;
2. reviews the report of the evaluation committee;
3. reviews the institution’s written response to the evaluation committee report, if submitted;
4. discusses with the chair of the evaluation committee the report and confidential recommendation regarding candidacy; and
5. meets with the institution’s chief executive officer and invites him or her to make a statement on behalf of the institution.

The evaluation committee submits a confidential recommendation to the Commission. The confidential recommendation is advisory only. After considering all available relevant information, including consultation with the chair of the committee, the Commission may modify the confidential recommendation in taking action on the institution’s Candidacy. Following the meeting, the institution’s chief executive officer is notified in writing of the Commission’s action. If granted, the effective date of Candidacy is the date of the Commission’s action. In case of denial, the reasons will be stated.

Withdrawal. The Commission permits the withdrawal of a request for recognition as a Candidate for Accreditation at any time prior to final action by the Commission.

Reconsideration. If an institution is denied candidacy by the Commission, it must wait at least two years before resubmitting an Application for Consideration. The institution has the option of appealing a Commission decision to deny Candidacy. (See Policy A-15 Appeals Policy and Procedure.)
Terms of Agreement. Institutions granted candidacy status must agree to the following terms:

1. Use the prescribed official definition for Candidate for Accreditation in all official publications and correspondence. For example:

   (Name of Institution) has been granted Candidate for Accreditation status by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Candidacy is not accreditation nor does it ensure eventual accreditation. Candidate for Accreditation is a status of affiliation with the Commission which indicates that the institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward accreditation.

2. Ensure that candidacy covers only those programs, degrees, and geographic locations of the institution at the time recognition was granted. Program, degree, and geographic location changes must be approved in advance by the Commission. (See Policy A-2 Substantive Change.)

3. File an annual report with the President of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Annual report forms are available to member and candidate institutions in the spring of each year.

4. Submit an Interim Candidacy Report and host an evaluation committee visit 18 months after initial candidacy is granted which addresses:
   a. changes in the mission and goals of the institution;
   b. changes in the general education or related instruction requirements;
   c. changes in locations where the institution is operating;
   d. changes in educational programs offered;
   e. changes in admissions, grading, and/or student services and programs;
   f. changes in policies affecting the faculty, changes in faculty salaries and other benefits, the extent to which the faculty has been strengthened;
   g. total number of faculty and number of full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty for each degree and certificate program for the current year and immediate past year;
   h. total number of enrolled students and full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment for each degree and certificate program for the current year and immediate past year; number of students awarded degrees or certificates for each program during the immediate past year;
   i. changes made in the physical plant, library, and laboratories to better serve the educational program and students;
   j. changes in the financial structure and condition of the institution, noting budgetary increases and/or decreases, operating surpluses or deficits, copy of current budget, and copy of last year’s audited financial statement;
   k. completed Tables #1 and #2 of Standard Seven - Finance; (required of all institutions)
   l. changes in administrative structure and personnel;
m. plans for the future that have been realized and new ones that have been formulated; and
n. accreditation-related contractual relationships with external organizations.

5. Host an on-site visit by representatives of the Commission for Continuation of Candidacy status every 18 months after initial candidacy is granted, or earlier if requested by the Commission.

6. Apply for accreditation only after consultation with the President of the Commission.

Loss of Candidate Status. Candidacy lapses when an institution fails to achieve accredited status within five years, the maximum allowed by the U.S. Department of Education (34 CFR 602.16[a][2]). An institution whose Candidacy lapses must wait at least two years before resubmitting an Application for Consideration.

The Commission also reserves the right during the Candidacy period to withdraw the institution’s Candidacy status, after due notice, if evidence of progress is lacking or if the conditions on which the institution was admitted to Candidacy are substantially altered.

If the Commission judges that candidacy status should be removed, a Show-Cause order will be issued requesting that the institution respond to the expressed concerns of the Commission within a specified period of time. The burden of proof rests with the institution to demonstrate why its candidacy should be continued. The circumstances may vary in each case, but among the matters to be taken into account are:

1. General lack of comprehensive planning;
2. Interference with institutional integrity;
3. Failure to meet enrollment projections;
4. Inadequate financial control and support;
5. Inadequate physical facilities and equipment;
6. Insufficient library and supportive educational resources;
7. Inadequacies in the number and professional competence of faculty, administrative, and support staff; and
8. Insufficient development of programs and curricula in relation to the institution’s catalog and other publications.

Receipt of the response to the Show-Cause order may be followed by a visit from a Commission representative or representatives. The institution is charged for the cost of the visit.

If the Commission acts to withdraw an institution’s Candidate status, the action may be appealed. (See Policy A-15 Appeals Policy and Procedures.) Pending action on appeal, the Candidacy status remains in effect. An institution whose Candidacy status is withdrawn by the Commission must wait a minimum of two years before resubmitting an Application for Consideration.
Institutional Commitment and Responsibilities in the Accreditation Process

The effectiveness of self-regulatory accreditation depends upon an institution’s acceptance of certain responsibilities, including involvement in and commitment to the accreditation process. An institution is expected to conduct an analytical self-study at the interval specified by the Commission and, at the conclusion of the self-study, accept peer assessment of institutional strengths and weaknesses with regard to the Commission’s accreditation criteria. The self-study is to assess every aspect of the institution; involve personnel from all segments of the institution, including faculty, staff, students, administration, and the governing board; and, provide a comprehensive analysis of the institution, identifying strengths and weaknesses.

An institution must participate in the activities and decisions of the Commission. This commitment includes a willingness to participate in the decision-making processes of the Commission and to adhere to all policies and procedures, including those for reporting changes within the institution. Only if institutions accept seriously the responsibilities of membership will the validity and vitality of the accreditation process be ensured.

An institution of higher education is committed to the search for and dissemination of knowledge. Integrity in the pursuit of knowledge is expected, therefore, to govern the total environment of an institution. Each member institution is responsible for ensuring integrity in all operations dealing with its constituencies, in its relationships with other institutions, and in its accreditation activities with the Commission. Each institution is expected to provide the Commission with access to all aspects of its operation. It should also provide accurate information about the institution’s affairs, including reports of other accrediting, licensing, and auditing agencies. In the spirit of collegiality, institutions are expected to cooperate fully during all aspects of the process of evaluation: the preliminary visit in preparation for an evaluation visit, the evaluation itself, and any follow-up to the evaluation visit. Institutions are also expected to provide the Commission, or its representatives, with information requested during evaluations, enabling evaluators to perform their duties with efficiency and effectiveness.

Each participating institution is to be in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. Failure to comply with Title IV responsibilities will be considered when an institution is reviewed for initial accreditation or continued accreditation. In reviewing an institution’s compliance with these program responsibilities, the Commission will rely on documentation forwarded to it by the Secretary of the United States Department of Education.

Institutional Compliance with the Higher Education Act. The Commission expects candidate and member institutions to comply with the Title IV requirements of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. Therefore, institutions will provide to evaluation committees for review and consideration the most recent default rates (and any default reduction plans approved by the U.S. Department of Education) and any other documents concerning the institution’s program responsibilities under Title IV of the Act, including any results of financial or compliance audits and program reviews.

Evaluation Committees evaluate the information and its relationship to the Eligibility Requirements and the Standards and Policies for Candidacy and Accreditation. The Commission reserves the right to review an institution’s accreditation status when U.S. Department of Education findings demonstrate significant noncompliance with the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.
Overview of Evaluation Process

The evaluation process, which is periodically and jointly conducted by the institution and the Commission, may take a number of forms. Regardless of the particular form employed, it includes the following steps:

1. A representative of the Commission conducts a preliminary visit on campus 18 to 24 months before an evaluation committee visit.

2. The institution analyzes itself through a self-study. Approximately four to six weeks prior to the evaluation visit, the print and electronic copies of the self-study report are mailed to the evaluation committee and to the Commission office.

3. Professional colleagues from other member institutions and appropriate agencies study the institutional self-study report, visit the campus as an evaluation committee, and prepare a written report of its findings.

4. A draft report of the evaluation committee’s report and findings is prepared and sent to the institution’s chief executive officer who is given an opportunity to correct errors of fact before the final report is prepared.

5. The committee’s final report is submitted to the Commission Office. The Commission Office provides the institution’s chief executive officer with a copy of the final version of the evaluation report.

6. If it so chooses, the institution may provide the Commission with a written response to the evaluation committee report.

7. The Commission reviews the institutional self-study report, the evaluation committee’s written report, the institution’s written response to the evaluation committee report (if submitted), verbal statements of the evaluation committee chair and the institution’s chief executive officer, and the evaluation committee’s confidential recommendation in taking action on the accreditation status of the institution.

8. The institution continues to consider and act on the results of its own self-study and the advice received.

The institutional self-study process is a major enterprise. It is an educational endeavor which requires time to reflect and engage in critical thinking. A full academic year is the minimum working time needed to complete the self-study. A two-year timeframe provides a better opportunity for organization, staff involvement, and appraisal. If done well, self-study is abundantly rewarding. If rushed, the results are likely to be of limited value and not worth the effort expended by the institution.
The following is a time line of the typical evaluation process:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Visit</th>
<th>Draft Report</th>
<th>Final Report</th>
<th>Committee Visit</th>
<th>Committee Report</th>
<th>Commission Action</th>
<th>Notify Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Study</td>
<td>&lt;At least 1 month&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;2 weeks&gt;</td>
<td>Institutional Review of Draft Report</td>
<td>Follow-up Requirements</td>
<td>&lt;Ongoing&gt;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1 to 1 1/2 years&gt;</td>
<td>&lt;1 month&gt;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Institutional Self-Study**

**General Discussion.** Institutional self-study is the most significant part of the accreditation process. The benefits to the institution will be proportional to the incisiveness of the inquiry. The aim of self-study is to understand, evaluate, and improve—not merely to defend what already exists. A well-conducted self-study should result in a renewed common effort within the institution to improve the whole enterprise and document its achievements.

Self-study should be viewed as an ongoing process to:

- analyze the resources and effectiveness of the institution in fulfilling its mission;
- demonstrate that student achievement is commensurate with the certificates, diplomas, degrees, or other recognition awarded;
- appraise the relationship of all the institution’s activities to its purposes; and
- provide a sound basis for institutional planning and improvement.

It is important that the institutional self-study assess educational outcomes or results as well as structure and process. The institutional self-study should assess student achievement with respect to programs and services offered to accomplish educational purposes. Prime consideration is to be placed on performance in achieving institutional mission and goals.

**Nature and Organization.** The concept of self-study as a continuing process does not mean that an institution is to be continuously involved in intensive, comprehensive self-analysis. The intensity of ongoing self-study may vary greatly from one institution to another, but the self-study presented to the Commission in preparation for an evaluation committee visit must be comprehensive, must evaluate the entire institution, and must address the Commission’s accreditation criteria.

The objectives of the self-study effort should be clearly and specifically stated, the methodology worked out in advance, and a time schedule set. It is imperative that those involved in the effort have ready access to all relevant data and materials. There must be frequent and widely disseminated reports of progress during the course of the ongoing self-study if a high level of interest is to be maintained.

Once the methodologies to be employed in the self-study have been established, a survey should be undertaken to discover relevant data which may be available. Care should be taken to avoid gathering data that are not put to a constructive use.
The Commission, while requiring the submission of an analytical self-study report in connection with an evaluation for Candidacy or Accreditation, recognizes that the self-study process is more beneficial to the institution when it is undertaken in response to significant needs identified by the institution itself. Accordingly, a variety of approaches to self-study is acceptable. An institution is permitted to propose some variation in the design of the self-study which it considers to be of intrinsic value as long as the overarching purposes of a comprehensive self-study are met and all Commission accreditation criteria are addressed. Representatives of the institution and the Commission should come to a clear agreement well ahead of the initiation of the self-study process, concerning any particular institutional needs which the institution hopes to have the self-study address. These understandings should be confirmed, in writing, by the President of the Commission.

The question of cost of continuing self-study is frequently raised. Even though educational institutions are faced with many demands and limited resources, their quest for excellence mandates that they support a mechanism for ongoing self-analysis. This does not mean that small institutions must maintain a staff exclusively assigned to this function. Many significant data are, or easily could be, assembled by any institution in the course of its daily work. An overall design for continuing self-analysis, once it has been set up, provides a framework for data-gathering and analysis. This need not be costly. Large complex institutions may find it feasible and desirable to maintain an office of institutional research for this particular purpose. The nature of the organization of the self-study will, however, vary according to the characteristics of the institution and scope, nature, and emphasis of the self-study.

Self-Study Steering Committee. Selection of the right individuals to serve on the self-study steering committee is very important. Institutional groups characterized by lack of bias, by objectivity, and by the ability to work cooperatively to forge compromises can be organized to mount a self-study. Strong, skillful, and committed leadership is essential and the selection of the coordinator of the study is therefore of paramount importance. It is important to have a steering committee broadly representative of the institution in order that objectivity may be promoted. Also, those whose interests might be affected by the results of the study should in some way be involved.

How the leadership and the participating personnel are selected, whether by election, appointment, or some combination of both, must be resolved in accordance with the tradition and climate of the institution. Whatever the method of selection, it is imperative that sufficient time for effective participation be cleared and that adequate staff support be provided.

Most institutions have multiple constituencies who have somewhat differing interests and values. The faculty, staff, administrators, and students may group themselves around such issues as the relative importance of general, as contrasted with specialized, education or the broader outcomes of a general education as contrasted with skill acquisition. The relative importance of research productivity on the one hand, and teaching effectiveness on the other, is a commonly encountered basis for alignment, especially in large, complex institutions. Another common division groups those who would expand the institution’s range of activities and broaden its constituency in contrast to those who would advocate a more limited role. An institution organizing for self-study should have these groupings in mind as it makes its plans and staffs its committees. The role of the governing board in the self-study process should be carefully considered. The institution should keep board members informed of policy matters addressed in the self-study.
It is true that a self-study can founder on issues involving basic disagreement among stakeholder groups. Alternatively, self-study could be used to bring issues into sharper focus and provide a basis for their resolution. Indeed, a well-designed self-study might be a catalyst for such resolution.

**Development of the Report.** Each committee or sub-group responsible for the various aspects of the study shall prepare a report setting forth the issue or issues addressed, the questions to which it sought answers, the data gathered and the means by which it gathered them, the techniques employed in analyzing the data (noting both successes and failures), and a statement indicating how the results have been used to enhance institutional effectiveness.

The separate reports shall be brought together by the steering committee, which has the responsibility for preparing a single, unified institutional report. The final editing should usually be done by one person.

The *Standards and Guide for Self-Study* provides a suggested framework of essential considerations for the self-study and for the evaluation committee. An institution is encouraged to design an analytic report best suited to its mission and supported by the necessary data presented in a concise and readable form. A summary chapter of findings with institutional commendations and recommendations resulting from the self-study process should be prepared.

Finally, though the experience of carrying on a self-study is, in itself, usually found to be salutary, a self-study which does not result in action is of limited benefit. Some means to ensure implementation of the recommendations of the self-study should be specified and included as part of the summary chapter.

**Supporting Documents.** At the end of each section of the self-study, list on a separate page the supporting materials that will be made available to evaluators in the self-study report, accompanying the self-study report, or in the evaluation committee workroom at the institution.

**Process Summary.** Recommendations for organizing and conducting a comprehensive self-study:

1. Highlight the role of the chief executive officer, which is to sustain maximum emphasis on the project, to stimulate without dominating, and to see that the results are translated into immediate action and/or long-range plans.

2. Appoint a steering committee of a size appropriate to the complexity of the institution, with an active and interested coordinator to plan the work, hold it in balance, suggest new approaches, and monitor the editing of the final report. The task of the coordinator is a major assignment. Institutions are strongly encouraged to send representatives to the self-study workshop sponsored annually by the Commission.

3. Provide members of the steering committee and key officials with copies of the *Accreditation Handbook*, or pertinent sections thereof.

4. Set up whatever task forces and committees the steering committee decides are needed (consider existing standing committees). Their first assignment is to become thoroughly familiar with the *Accreditation Handbook* and related documents.
5. Determine how the institution will evaluate its effectiveness in fulfilling its mission, what evidence is needed to support institutional judgments, and what data need to be collected.

6. Emphasize relationships among, as well as performance within, institutional units; encourage healthy cross-pollination of ideas. The study needs to present the entire institution.

7. Avoid the temptation of asking outside consultants to provide answers to the institution’s concerns. If consultants are used, draw upon their experience for suggestions to the institution as to ways in which it might address its concerns.

8. Adopt a definite timetable; make it realistic and insist on maintaining it. Set a publication date to ensure the self-study report is available at least eight weeks before the evaluation committee is due to arrive so that it can be sent to the Commission office and to the evaluators four to six weeks prior the visit. Having determined the finish date, allow at least one month for final editing and duplicating. Then work back toward the beginning, allowing the necessary intervals for each stage. Set realistic timelines. Remember that self-study is a major undertaking involving many people. It must deal with the separate phases of the institution’s life, but it must go beyond them in its concern with their relationships, with the focusing or directing of the institution’s total effort, with its overall educational impact, as well as with the efficiency of each of its units.

9. Implement the results of the study through to action. New thinking, new patterns, new proposals, and very likely new unity behind them will emerge during the process. The institution should see that each proposal is channeled in the proper direction and that follow-up is consistent. Perhaps the steering committee can remain helpful in the post-evaluation stage, too, but clearly the chief executive officer, the deans, and the faculty standing committees have continuing responsibilities.

**Evaluation Committee**

**Function.** Members of an evaluation committee function as colleagues as well as constructive critics. The purpose is to produce a committee report which will be useful to the institution and to the Commission which must make a decision on the institution’s accreditation status.

**Committee Make-Up.** The number of reviewers that comprise an evaluation committee depends upon the characteristics of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. Every principal area of the institution must be examined. Evaluators are assigned from peer, out-of-state member institutions. In some cases, evaluators represent appropriate agencies and peer institutions from other accrediting regions. All evaluators will have completed evaluator training by the Commission and the committee chair will be an experienced evaluator. In selecting evaluators, care is taken to avoid a real or perceived conflict of interest. The evaluation committee roster is sent to the institution six to eight weeks in advance of the visit, and the chief executive officer is requested to notify the Commission office of any concern about the composition of the committee.

**Dates.** The dates for the committee evaluation are determined by the Commission office in consultation with the institution’s chief executive officer. This is normally completed two years in advance of the visit. A concerted effort is made to arrange dates most suitable to the institution; however, compromises are sometimes necessary. Dates are selected to allow sufficient time for the committee report to be prepared for the summer or winter Commission meeting. Evaluations in spring will be considered at the Commission’s summer meeting and evaluation visits in fall will be considered at the Commission’s
winter meeting. The Commission’s action will be reported in writing to the institution within one month following the Commission meeting at which the action was taken.

**Evaluation Committee Report.** At the conclusion of the on-campus evaluation visit, each evaluator provides the committee chair with a report for the evaluator’s area of responsibility. The committee chair, on behalf of the committee, is responsible for preparing a draft of the evaluation report. The draft evaluation report is sent to the institution’s chief executive officer for review and correction of errors of fact. The committee chair then finalizes the evaluation committee report and submits it to the Commission office.

Prior to the summer or winter meetings the final version of the evaluation committee report is duplicated and sent to the institution’s chief executive officer and to members of the Commission. The evaluation committee’s confidential recommendation on the institution’s accreditation is not included in the evaluation committee report, but is communicated privately to the Commission.

The committee’s evaluation report is considered confidential. Unless authorization is granted by the institution, the Commission does not distribute the evaluation committee report to other individuals or organizations. The institution’s chief executive officer is given an opportunity to provide a written response to the evaluation committee report for consideration by the Commission. The institution is also invited to send representatives to appear before the Commission when the institution’s accreditation is being considered.

Although there may be some disagreement with aspects of the report, it should be used to improve the institution. In order to achieve this goal, the trustees, administrators, and faculty members are expected to give serious consideration to the report and the findings of the committee. The Commission expects the institution to use the report objectively. In preparing public announcements, the institution should avoid quoting the report out of context or reporting only the favorable or unfavorable passages.

**Newly Accredited Institutions.** Institutions granted Initial Accreditation are not accredited for a specific number of years. They are expected to submit a progress report in the third year following the year of initial accreditation and to conduct a comprehensive self-study and host an evaluation committee in the fifth year following the year of initial accreditation. If, in the Commission’s judgment, an institution is not ready for membership, it may defer a decision pending further reports on specific matters and/or a visit by a small committee, or it might deny initial accreditation.

When Accreditation is initially granted by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the effective date of accreditation is September 1 of the academic year in which the Commission took action. For example, if the Commission granted Initial Accreditation in summer of 2004, the effective date of Accreditation is September 1, 2003.

**Reaffirmation of Accreditation.** Continuing members are not accredited permanently or for a definite number of years. Accreditation must be reaffirmed periodically. Every institution is to conduct a self-study and be visited by an evaluation committee at least every ten years. In addition, each institution is to prepare an interim report and be visited by one or more representatives of the Commission at five year intervals between decennial visits. At the time of reaffirmation, the Commission may request an institution to submit additional reports at specified times or to submit additional reports and receive a visit by a small evaluation committee. The Commission may also request that an institution conduct a complete self-study and be visited by a comprehensive evaluation committee.
Commission Decisions on Institutions

Once the Commission has made a decision regarding candidacy or accreditation of an institution, it will provide written notification of the action to the institution within one month of the date the action was taken. Commission action with regard to institutions include:

1. Grant Candidacy or Initial Accreditation.
2. Continue Candidacy or Reaffirm Accreditation.
3. Request a Progress Report and/or a Focused Interim Report and Visit.
4. Defer action on Candidacy or Accreditation.
5. Issue or Continue Warning.
6. Impose or Continue Probation.
7. Issue or Continue a Show-Cause order with Candidacy or Accreditation to terminate unless the institution has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Commission that it has satisfied the Commission’s concerns or responded to its directives prior to a specified date.
8. Deny Candidacy or Accreditation.
9. Terminate Candidacy or Accreditation.

All of the Commission actions set forth above, except number 5, are posted to the Commission’s website, published in the Directory of Accredited and Preaccredited Institutions, and in the minutes of the Commission meeting at which the action took place. In addition, in taking any of the above actions, the Commission may impose conditions on continued accreditation or candidacy status or request additional reporting or site visits. (See Policy A-3 Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Commission Actions.)

Reaplication for Accreditation. An institution not granted Candidacy or Initial Accreditation may resubmit an Application for Consideration no fewer than two years following the date of the Commission’s action to deny Candidacy or Initial Accreditation. An institution whose Candidacy or Accreditation has been terminated may resubmit an Application for Consideration no fewer than two years following the date of the Commission’s action to terminate Candidacy or Accreditation.
Membership Dues and Fees

**Dues.** The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities determines annual dues for candidate and member institutions based upon total educational and general expenditures and mandatory transfers (exclusive of medical school and hospital budgets) for the previous academic year as reported to IPEDS. Invoices for annual dues are mailed in early fall of each year.

The current dues structure may be found in the Accreditation Process section of the NWCCU website (www.nwccu.org).

**Evaluation Fee Schedule.** Institutions being evaluated by representatives of the Commission are charged $1,200 per evaluator. In case of special circumstances, the Commission reserves the right to adjust a committee evaluation fee to fit the circumstances.

**Billing.** An institution is billed and is expected to pay the evaluation fee in advance of the evaluation visit. In case of special circumstances, institutions will be billed after the site visit.

**Communications with the Commission.** The Commission’s chief executive officer is the President, whose office is located at 8060 165th Avenue NE, Suite 100, Redmond, Washington, 98052-3981. Communications regarding institutional evaluations and accreditation should be addressed to the President.
COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ACCREDITATION PROCESS

National Recognition of Accrediting Agencies and Associations. For purposes of determining eligibility for United States government assistance under certain legislation, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education is required to publish a list of nationally recognized accrediting agencies and associations that he/she determines to be reliable authorities as to the quality of education offered by educational institutions and programs. Most institutions thus attain eligibility for Federal funds by holding accredited or candidate status with one of the accrediting bodies recognized by the Secretary in addition to fulfilling other eligibility requirements.

The commissions of the regional associations and the national accrediting agencies recognized by the Secretary have no legal control over educational institutions or programs. They promulgate standards of quality and admit to membership those institutions that meet the standards.

Relationship with the U.S. Department of Education. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities has been listed since 1952 by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education as a nationally recognized accrediting agency for institutions offering programs of at least one academic year in length at the postsecondary level. Recognition was most recently reaffirmed in December 2002 for a five-year period. The Commission notifies the Department of any changes in the scope of its activities.

Within thirty (30) working days, the Commission files notification with the U.S. Department of Education the actions it has taken on institutions. However, it immediately files copies of institutional action letters that involve adverse action, Probation, or Show-Cause.

The Commission maintains communication with the Department of Education and other federal agencies. It responds to DOE inquiries regarding institutional eligibility for participation in the Higher Education Act programs, including Title IV; on receipt, it forwards to the institution for comment claims of Title IV fraud and abuse; and it shares with the Department of Education clear evidence of possible Title IV fraud and abuse. The Commission notifies an institution whenever the Department provides such information.

Actions of State Agencies and Other Accrediting Bodies. In considering whether to grant Candidacy or Initial Accreditation status to an institution, the Commission requires an institution to report to it actions taken by other recognized accrediting bodies which have (a) denied such status to the institution, (b) placed the institution on public probation, or (c) revoked the accreditation or pre-accreditation status of the institution.

An institution accredited by or having Candidate for Accreditation status with the Commission is expected to remain in good standing with other recognized accrediting bodies or specialized accrediting bodies which accredit the principal program of the institution with which it has accreditation or pre-accreditation status. If another recognized accrediting body or governmental agency (a) places an institution or a principal program offered by the institution on public probationary status or (b) revokes such status, the institution shall report that action to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, which will promptly review the accreditation or candidacy status it has previously granted to the institution to determine if there is cause to alter that status.
In accordance with 34 CFR 602.28(b), the Commission will not reaffirm the candidacy or accreditation of an institution during a period in which the institution has:

1. a pending or final action brought by a State agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution’s legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the State;

2. a decision by a recognized agency to deny accreditation or preaccreditation;

3. a pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution’s accreditation or preaccreditation; or

4. Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized agency.

In adhering to these above principles and, in cooperation with other appropriate recognized accrediting bodies and governmental agencies, the Commission will routinely share with other such bodies the accreditation or candidacy status of all of its Accredited and Candidate institutions.

Retention of Records. Through its records retention program, the Commission maintains the official records of Commission actions on institutions. It also retains copies of institutional reports and materials, and copies of evaluation reports which formed the basis for those actions. These materials include applications for candidacy, comprehensive self-study reports and evaluation committee reports, progress reports, focused interim reports and evaluation reports, and regular fifth-year interim reports and evaluation reports. These documents are maintained through two complete evaluation cycles.
STANDARDS AND GUIDE FOR SELF-STUDY

Introduction to the Standards and Their Use in Self-Study

Structure of the Standards. Each of the nine Standards is identified by number and name (e.g., Standard Three - Students). The scope of each Standard is provided in lettered Standard Elements (e.g., 3.A, 3.B, 3.C). Each Standard Element is accompanied by a statement that represents the general intent of the Standard Element. Further definition of Standard Elements is provided in the form of numbered Standard Indicators (e.g., 3.A.1, 3.A.2, 3.A.3).

Related accreditation Policies follow several of the Standards. These Policies are considered part of the Standard and are intended to further define the Standard.

Following each Standard and the Related Policies is a section which identifies supporting documentation for the standard. The purpose of the supporting documentation is to provide evidence of the manner in which each standard and its elements are met. The evidence is to provide greater meaning to the narrative and analysis of the self-study. The Commission has identified three kinds of documentation:

Required Documentation: Documents or information embedded in the body of the self-study report, provided in the appendices, or included with the self-study materials sent to the Commission office;

Required Exhibits: Documents or information to be summarized in the self-study, provided in the appendices, included with the self-study materials sent to the Commission office, or made available in the room on campus provided for the evaluation committee;

Suggested Materials: Documents or information recommended to the institution for consideration in documenting the self-study report. They should be made available in the room on campus provided for the evaluation committee.

Self-Study, Supporting Documentation, and Accreditation Policies. In preparing the self-study report and visit, the institution is expected to demonstrate that it meets each standard, each element of the Commission’s Eligibility Requirements and accreditation Standards and Related Policies, and all other applicable policies. The self-study document should be succinct, thoughtful, and analytical including an appraisal of the institution’s strengths, weaknesses, and achievements relative to each standard.
Standard One - Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness

Standard 1.A - Mission and Goals

The institution’s mission and goals define the institution, including its educational activities, its student body, and its role within the higher education community. The evaluation proceeds from the institution’s own definition of its mission and goals. Such evaluation is to determine the extent to which the mission and goals are achieved and are consistent with the Commission’s Eligibility Requirements and standards for accreditation.

1.A.1 The institution’s mission and goals derive from, or are widely understood by, the campus community, are adopted by the governing board, and are periodically reexamined.

1.A.2 The mission, as adopted by the governing board, appears in appropriate institutional publications, including the catalog.

1.A.3 Progress in accomplishing the institution’s mission and goals is documented and made public.

1.A.4 Goals are determined consistent with the institution’s mission and its resources - human, physical, and financial.

1.A.5 The institution’s mission and goals give direction to all its educational activities, to its admission policies, selection of faculty, allocation of resources, and to planning.

1.A.6 Public service is consistent with the educational mission and goals of the institution.

1.A.7 The institution reviews with the Commission, contemplated changes that would alter its mission, autonomy, ownership or locus of control, or its intention to offer a degree at a higher level than is included in its present accreditation, or other changes in accordance with Policy A-2 Substantive Change.

Standard 1.B - Planning and Effectiveness

The institution engages in ongoing planning to achieve its mission and goals. It also evaluates how well, and in what ways, it is accomplishing its mission and goals and uses the results for broad-based, continuous planning and evaluation. Through its planning process, the institution asks questions, seeks answers, analyzes itself, and revises its goals, policies, procedures, and resource allocation.

1.B.1 The institution clearly defines its evaluation and planning processes. It develops and implements procedures to evaluate the extent to which it achieves institutional goals.

1.B.2 The institution engages in systematic planning for, and evaluation of, its activities, including teaching, research, and public service consistent with institutional mission and goals.
1.B.3 The planning process is participatory involving constituencies appropriate to the institution such as board members, administrators, faculty, staff, students, and other interested parties.

1.B.4 The institution uses the results of its systematic evaluation activities and ongoing planning processes to influence resource allocation and to improve its instructional programs, institutional services, and activities.

1.B.5 The institution integrates its evaluation and planning processes to identify institutional priorities for improvement.

1.B.6 The institution provides the necessary resources for effective evaluation and planning processes.

1.B.7 The institution’s research is integrated with and supportive of institutional evaluation and planning.

1.B.8 The institution systematically reviews its institutional research efforts, its evaluation processes, and its planning activities to document their effectiveness.

1.B.9 The institution uses information from its planning and evaluation processes to communicate evidence of institutional effectiveness to its public.

**Supporting Documentation for Standard One**

Required Documentation:

1. Official statement of the institutional mission: Indicate how and when it was developed, approved, and communicated to the institution’s constituencies.

2. Evidence that demonstrates the analysis and appraisal of institutional outcomes. Examples may include:
   - annual goals and assessment of success in their accomplishments;
   - studies of alumni and former students;
   - studies regarding effectiveness of programs and their graduates;
   - studies that indicate degree of success in placing graduates;
   - pre- and post-test comparisons of student knowledge, skills, and abilities; and
   - surveys of satisfaction - students, alumni, and employees.

Required Exhibits:

Institutional short term, strategic, or long term plans, including system master plans.

Suggested Materials:

Planning studies, enrollments for the past five years, enrollment projections, program and personnel needs analyses, fund development plans, and other institutional research results.
Standard Two - Educational Program
And Its Effectiveness

Standard 2.A - General Requirements

The institution offers collegiate level programs that culminate in identified student competencies and lead to degrees or certificates in recognized fields of study. The achievement and maintenance of high quality programs is the primary responsibility of an accredited institution; hence, the evaluation of educational programs and their continuous improvement is an ongoing responsibility. As conditions and needs change, the institution continually redefines for itself the elements that result in educational programs of high quality.

2.A.1 The institution demonstrates its commitment to high standards of teaching and learning by providing sufficient human, physical, and financial resources to support its educational programs and to facilitate student achievement of program objectives whenever and however they are offered.

2.A.2 The goals of the institution’s educational programs, whenever and however offered, including instructional policies, methods, and delivery systems, are compatible with the institution’s mission. They are developed, approved, and periodically evaluated under established institutional policies and procedures through a clearly defined process.

2.A.3 Degree and certificate programs demonstrate a coherent design; are characterized by appropriate breadth, depth, sequencing of courses, synthesis of learning, and the assessment of learning outcomes; and require the use of library and other information sources.

2.A.4 The institution uses degree designators consistent with program content. In each field of study or technical program, degree objectives are clearly defined: the content to be covered, the intellectual skills, the creative capabilities, and the methods of inquiry to be acquired; and, if applicable, the specific career-preparation competencies to be mastered.

2.A.5 The institution provides evidence that students enrolled in programs offered in concentrated or abbreviated timeframes demonstrate mastery of program goals and course objectives.

2.A.6 The institution is able to equate its learning experiences with semester or quarter credit hours using practices common to institutions of higher education, to justify the lengths of its programs in comparison to similar programs found in regionally accredited institutions of higher education, and to justify any program-specific tuition in terms of program costs, program length, and program objectives.

2.A.7 Responsibility for design, approval, and implementation of the curriculum is vested in designated institutional bodies with clearly established channels of communication and control. The faculty has a major role and responsibility in the design, integrity, and implementation of the curriculum.

2.A.8 Faculty, in partnership with library and information resources personnel, ensure that the use of library and information resources is integrated into the learning process.
2.A.9 The institution’s curriculum (programs and courses) is planned both for optimal learning and accessible scheduling.

2.A.10 Credit for prior experiential learning is awarded only in accordance with Policy 2.3 Credit for Prior Experiential Learning.

2.A.11 Policies, regulations, and procedures for additions and deletions of courses or programs are systematically and periodically reviewed.

2.A.12 In the event of program elimination or significant change in requirements, institutional policy requires appropriate arrangements to be made for enrolled students to complete their program in a timely manner and with a minimum of disruption.

**Standard 2.B - Educational Program Planning and Assessment**

Educational program planning is based on regular and continuous assessment of programs in light of the needs of the disciplines, the fields or occupations for which programs prepare students, and other constituencies of the institution.

2.B.1 The institution’s processes for assessing its educational programs are clearly defined, encompass all of its offerings, are conducted on a regular basis, and are integrated into the overall planning and evaluation plan. These processes are consistent with the institution’s assessment plan as required by Policy 2.2 Educational Assessment. While key constituents are involved in the process, the faculty have a central role in planning and evaluating the educational programs.

2.B.2 The institution identifies and publishes the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete their programs, no matter where or how they are offered, have achieved these outcomes.

2.B.3 The institution provides evidence that its assessment activities lead to the improvement of teaching and learning.

**Standard 2.C - Undergraduate Program**

The undergraduate program is designed to provide students with a substantial, coherent, and articulated exposure to the broad domains of knowledge.

The Commission encourages a tripartite structure for baccalaureate and academic or transfer associate degree programs: (1) general education requires students to master competencies for independent learning and to develop an awareness of the fundamental areas of knowledge; (2) the major requires students to achieve a knowledge base in a specific area of concentration; and (3) electives provide the opportunity for students to pursue other intellectual interests.
The instructional program, as a whole, is based on a clear rationale with the component parts designed to reflect that rationale. Degree and certificate programs are characterized by clarity and order which are discernible in model curricula shown in official publications and are recorded in official student records of actual programs pursued.

Baccalaureate and academic or transfer associate degree programs include a substantial core of general education instruction with identifiable outcomes and require competence in (a) written and oral communication, (b) quantitative reasoning, (c) critical analysis and logical thinking, and (d) literacy in the discourse or technology appropriate to the program of study.

Associate degree programs are designed to prepare students for careers in vocational and technical fields, and for transfer to a senior institution. Accordingly, the educational requirements for these degrees must be carefully determined in order to fulfill their respective purposes.

Programs of study for which applied or specialized associate degrees are granted, or programs of an academic year or more in length for which certificates are granted, contain a recognizable body of instruction in three program-related areas: (1) communication, (2) computation, and (3) human relations described in Policy 2.1 General Education/Related Instruction Requirements.

2.C.1 The institution requires of all its degree and pre-baccalaureate programs a component of general education and/or related instruction that is published in its general catalog in clear and complete terms.

2.C.2 The general education component of the institution’s degree programs is based on a rationale that is clearly articulated and is published in clear and complete terms in the catalog. It provides the criteria by which the relevance of each course to the general education component is evaluated.

2.C.3 The general education program offerings include the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, mathematics, and the social sciences. The program may also include courses that focus on the interrelationships between these major fields of study.

2.C.4 The institution’s policies for the transfer and acceptance of credit are clearly articulated. In accepting transfer credits to fulfill degree requirements, the institution ensures that the credits accepted are comparable to its own courses. Where patterns of transfer from other institutions are established, efforts to formulate articulation agreements are demonstrated.

2.C.5 The institution designs and maintains effective academic advising programs to meet student needs for information and advice, and adequately informs and prepares faculty and other personnel responsible for the advising function.

2.C.6 Whenever developmental or remedial work is required for admission to the institution or any of its programs, clear policies govern the procedures that are followed, including such matters as ability to benefit, permissible student load, and granting of credit. When such courses are granted credit, students are informed of the institution’s policy of whether or not the credits apply toward a degree. (See Glossary, Ability to benefit)
2.C.7 The institution’s faculty is adequate for the educational levels offered, including full-time faculty representing each field in which it offers major work.

2.C.8 In an effort to further establish an institution’s success with respect to student achievement, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall require those institutions that offer pre-baccalaureate vocational programs to track State licensing examination pass rates, as applicable, and job placement rates.

**Standard 2.D - Graduate Program**

A graduate program is a set of advanced academic experiences beyond the baccalaureate level which must be satisfactorily completed to warrant the award of a graduate degree such as a master’s or doctorate.

Graduate degree programs may generally be classified into two categories: those that prepare students mainly as scholars and researchers and those that prepare students for a profession. The objective of a research-oriented graduate degree program is to develop scholars — that is, students with skills necessary to discover or acquire, organize, and disseminate new knowledge. The objective of the professional graduate degree is to develop in students their competence in interpreting, organizing, and communicating knowledge and to develop the analytical and performance skills needed for the conduct and advancement of professional practice.

2.D.1 The level and nature of graduate-degree programs are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.

2.D.2 Programs of study at the graduate level are guided by well-defined and appropriate educational objectives and differ from undergraduate programs in requiring greater depth of study and increased demands on student intellectual or creative capacities.

2.D.3 When offering the doctoral degree, the institution ensures that the level of expectations, curricula, and resources made available are significantly greater than those provided for master’s and baccalaureate level programs.

**Standard 2.E - Graduate Faculty and Related Resources**

Essential to graduate education are the recruitment and retention of a faculty that excels in scholarship, teaching, and research. To provide an acceptable level of instruction for the graduate student, faculty whose responsibilities include a major commitment to graduate education are involved in keeping pace with, and advancing the frontiers of, knowledge.

Successful graduate programs demand a substantial institutional commitment of resources for faculty, space, equipment, laboratories, library and information resources.

2.E.1 The institution provides evidence that it makes available for graduate programs the required resources for faculty, facilities, equipment, laboratories, library and information resources wherever the graduate programs are offered and however delivered.
2.E.2 The institution demonstrates a continuing commitment of resources to initiate graduate programs and to ensure that the graduate programs maintain pace with the expansion of knowledge and technology.

2.E.3 Institutions offering graduate degrees have appropriate full-time faculty in areas appropriate to the degree offered and whose main activity lies with the institution. Such faculty are related by training and research to the disciplines in which they teach and supervise research.

2.E.4 Faculty are adequate in number and sufficiently diversified within disciplines so as to provide effective teaching, advising, scholarly and/or creative activity, as well as to participate appropriately in curriculum development, policy development, evaluation, institutional planning, and development. Small graduate programs ordinarily require the participation of several full-time faculty whose responsibilities include a major commitment to graduate education.

2.E.5 In the delivery of off-campus programs, full-time faculty whose responsibilities include a major commitment to graduate education provide physical presence and participation in the planning, delivery, and assessment of the programs.

2.E.6 The institution that offers the doctoral degree has a core of full-time faculty active in graduate education at its main campus and at each off-campus location where doctoral programs are offered.

**Standard 2.F - Graduate Records and Academic Credit**

Graduate admission and retention policies ensure that student qualifications and expectations are compatible with institutional mission and goals. Graduate program faculty are involved in specifying admission criteria, transfer of graduate credit, and graduation requirements.

2.F.1 Graduate program admission policies and regulations are consistent with and supportive of the character of the graduate programs offered by the institution. These policies and regulations are published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.

2.F.2 Admission to all graduate programs is based on information submitted with the formal application such as undergraduate and graduate transcripts, official reports on nationally recognized tests, and evaluations by professionals in the field or other faculty-controlled evaluation procedures.

2.F.3 Faculty teaching in graduate programs are involved in establishing both general admission criteria for graduate study as well as admission criteria to specific graduate programs.

2.F.4 Graduation requirements for advanced degrees offered by the institution are determined by the faculty teaching in the applicable graduate programs. At minimum, the policies governing these graduation requirements include:
• the specified time period in which the degree must be completed;
• the number of credit hours that must be completed at the degree-granting institution, normally at least two-thirds of those required for the degree;
• the minimum number of graduate-level credits, normally at least 50% of those required for the degree;
• for the master’s degree, a minimum of one academic year of full-time study or its equivalent, with a minimum of 24 semester or 36 quarter hours;
• the number of graded credit hours that must be earned for the degree;
• the minimum standard of performance or acceptable grade point average, normally a B or its equivalent;
• the types of qualifying and exit examinations which the candidate must pass;
• the proficiency requirements the candidate must satisfy; and
• the thesis, dissertation, writing, or research requirement which the candidate must satisfy.

2.F.5 Transfer of graduate credit is evaluated by faculty based on policies established by faculty whose responsibilities include a major commitment to graduate education, or by a representative body of such faculty who are responsible for the degree program at the receiving institution. The amount of transfer credit granted may be limited by the age of the credit, the institution from which the transfer is made, and the appropriateness of the credit earned to the degree being sought.

2.F.6 Graduate credit may be granted for internships, field experiences, and clinical practices that are an integral part of the graduate degree program. Consistent with Policy 2.3 Credit for Prior Experiential Learning, credit may not be granted for experiential learning which occurred prior to the student’s matriculation into the graduate degree program. Unless the graduate student’s faculty advisor structures the current learning experience and monitors and assesses the learning and its outcomes, no graduate credit is granted for current learning experiences external to the student’s formal graduate program.

**Standard 2.G - Continuing Education and Special Learning Activities**

The changing nature of the demands placed upon individuals in today’s society requires many of them to engage in life-long education. Many higher education institutions have incorporated into their missions an extension and public service component to provide for life-long learning opportunities. These opportunities are referred to as continuing education, professional development, extension education, outreach, special programs, public and community service programs. Such programs may be for either undergraduate or graduate credit, or non-credit, may be offered on and off campus, and may be offered through a variety of instructional formats.

The provisions of this standard apply to:

• Off-campus programs and courses for credit, including those at branch campuses, extension centers or satellite sites, external degree programs, and military base programs.
- Degree-completion programs.
- Distance learning courses and courses taught exclusively on or off campus by special delivery systems, such as computer-based instruction, correspondence, television, video or audio cassette, or through other electronically-accessed means.
- Practices providing credit for prior experiential learning.
- Travel/study and study abroad programs.
- Courses certified by the institution offered in secondary schools for college or university academic credit.
- Non-credit community service programs and courses, including those that offer Continuing Education Units (CEU).
- Relicensure courses, in-service, and credential programs.
- Testing, evaluation, and examination procedures for granting degree credit.
- Workshops, seminars, short courses, conferences, institutes, special evening and summer programs.

**Off-Campus and Other Special Programs Providing Academic Credit**

Continuing education and special learning activities, programs, and courses offered for credit are consistent with the educational mission and goals of the institution. Such activities are integral parts of the institution and maintain the same academic standards as regularly offered programs and courses. The institution maintains direct and sole responsibility for the academic quality of all aspects of all programs and courses through the management and supervision by faculty and institutional administrators. Adequate resources to maintain high quality programs are ensured.

2.G.1 The institution provides evidence that all off-campus, continuing education (credit and non-credit), and other special programs are compatible with the institution’s mission and goals, and are designed, approved, administered, and periodically evaluated under established institutional procedures.

2.G.2 The institution is solely responsible for the academic and fiscal elements of all instructional programs it offers. The institution conforms to Policy A-6 *Contractual Relationships with Organizations Not Regionally Accredited*.

2.G.3 Full-time faculty representing the appropriate disciplines and fields of work are involved in the planning and evaluation of the institution’s continuing education and special learning activities.

2.G.4 The responsibility for the administration of continuing education and special learning activities is clearly defined and an integral organizational component of the institution’s organization.

2.G.5 Programs and courses offered through electronically-mediated or other distance delivery systems provide ready access to appropriate learning resources and provide sufficient time and opportunities (electronic or others) for students to interact with faculty.

2.G.6 There is an equitable fee structure and refund policy.
2.G.7 The granting of credit for continuing education courses and special learning activities is based upon institutional policy, consistent throughout the institution, and applied wherever located and however delivered. The standard of one quarter hour of credit for 30 hours or one semester hour of credit for 45 hours of student involvement is maintained for instructional programs and courses.

2.G.8 Continuing education and/or special learning activities, programs, or courses offered for academic credit are approved in advance by the appropriate institutional body and monitored through established procedures.

2.G.9 Credit for prior experiential learning is offered only at the undergraduate level and in accordance with Policy 2.3 Credit for Prior Experiential Learning.

2.G.10 An institution offering an external degree, degree-completion program, or special degree has clearly articulated policies and procedures concerning admission to the program, transfer of prior-earned credit, credit by examination (e.g., College Level Examination Program (CLEP) of the College Entrance Examination Board and the institution’s own examinations), credit for prior experiential learning, credit by evaluation, and residency requirements.

2.G.11 When credit is measured by outcomes alone or other nontraditional means, student learning and achievement are demonstrated to be at least comparable in breadth, depth, and quality to the results of traditional instructional practices.

2.G.12 Travel/study courses meet the same academic standards, award similar credit, and are subject to the same institutional control as other courses and programs offered by the sponsoring or participating institution. Credit is not awarded for travel alone. The operation of these programs is consistent with Policy 2.4 Study Abroad Programs, and Policy A-6 Contractual Relationships with Organizations Not Regionally Accredited.

**Standard 2.H - Non-credit Programs and Courses**

Non-credit programs and courses, including those that award Continuing Education Units (CEU), are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution. These offerings are characterized by high quality instruction with qualified instructors.

2.H.1 Non-credit programs and courses are administered under appropriate institutional policies, regulations, and procedures. Faculty are involved, as appropriate, in planning and evaluating non-credit programs.

2.H.2 The institution maintains records for audit purposes which describe the nature, level, and quantity of service provided through non-credit instruction.

2.H.3 When offering courses that award Continuing Education Units (CEU), the institution follows national guidelines for awarding and recording such units which call for one CEU being equivalent to 10 hours of instruction and appropriate to the objectives of the course. (See Glossary, Continuing Education Unit, and Policy A-9 Non-credit, Extension, and Continuing Education Studies.)
Policy 2.1 General Education/Related Instruction Requirements

The Commission endorses the concept of general education and, as described below, requires of all undergraduate programs a substantial and coherent program of general education or a program of related instruction. By design, the policy is intended to be qualitative rather than quantitative in nature. No formula for specific application or particular pattern of general education is endorsed. However, every institution is expected to publish in its general catalog a clear and complete statement of its requirements for general education and/or related instruction, as appropriate.

A substantial core of general education instruction is regarded as an essential component of all baccalaureate degree programs and of all academic or transfer associate degree programs. Similarly, a core of related instruction is regarded as a necessary integral part of all applied or specialized associate degree programs and of all certificate programs of an academic year or more in length. General education in degree programs shall be of collegiate level. The contents of general education, and of related instruction in applied or specialized degree and certificate programs, should be comparable, though not necessarily identical, to traditional academic offerings and should be taught by faculty who are clearly appropriately qualified. In some cases, institutions may provide for general education through admission or graduation requirements. Institutions are encouraged to include broad general education instruction as part of non-degree specialized programs in addition to directly utilitarian-related instruction.

General Education. General education introduces students to the content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge - the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, mathematics, and the social sciences - and helps them develop the mental skills that will make them more effective learners. General education may, of course, be taught in different ways, and an institution must judge whether its students are better served by curricula or requirements that approach the disciplines through content and methodology, or that approach the disciplines by concentrating on outcomes. The rationale and plan for the general education requirements should be cooperatively developed by the faculty, administrative staff, and trustees, and the expected outcomes should be stated in relation to the institution’s mission and goals.

Related Instruction. Programs of study for which applied or specialized associate degrees are granted, or programs of an academic year or more in length for which certificates are granted, must contain a recognizable body of instruction in program-related areas of 1) communication, 2) computation, and 3) human relations. Additional topics which should be covered as appropriate include safety, industrial safety, and environmental awareness. Instruction in the related instructional areas may be either embedded within the program curriculum or taught in blocks of specialized instruction. Each approach, however, must have clearly identified content that is pertinent to the general program of study.

Adopted 1988
Policy 2.2 Educational Assessment

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities expects each institution and program to adopt an assessment plan responsive to its mission and its needs. In so doing, the Commission urges the necessity of a continuing process of academic planning, the carrying out of those plans, the assessment of the outcomes, and the influencing of the planning process by the assessment activities.

As noted in Standard Two, implicit in the mission statement of every institution of higher education is the education of students. Consequently, each institution has an obligation to plan carefully its courses of instruction to respond to student needs, to evaluate the effectiveness of that educational program in terms of the change it brings about in students, and to make improvements in the program dictated by the evaluative process. Assessment of educational quality has always been at the heart of the accreditation process. In earlier times, this assessment tended to focus more upon process measures and structural features; hence, there was considerable emphasis placed upon resources available to enhance students’ educational experiences such as the range and variety of graduate degrees held by members of the faculty, the number of books in the library, the quality of specialized laboratory equipment, and the like. More recently, while still stressing the need to assess the quantity and quality of the whole educational experience, the communities of interest served by the accreditation enterprise have come to appreciate the validity and usefulness of using output evaluations and assessment as well as input measures.

Nearly every institution accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities engages in some type of outcomes assessment. Some are more formalized than others; some more quantified; some less so; some well-developed and long-utilized, and some of more recent origin and implementation. The intent of Commission policy is to stress outcomes assessment as an essential part of the ongoing institutional self-study and accreditation processes, to underline the necessity for each institution to formulate a plan which provides for a series of outcomes measures that are internally consistent and in accord with its mission and structure, and, finally, to provide some examples of a variety of successful plans for assessing educational outcomes.

Central to the outcomes analyses or assessments are judgments about the effects of the educational program upon students. These judgments can be made in a variety of ways and can be based upon a variety of data sources. The more data sources that contribute to the overall judgment, the more reliable that judgment would seem to be. There follows a list of several outcomes measures which, when used in appropriate combinations and informed by the institutional mission, could yield an efficacious program of outcomes assessment. This list is intended to be illustrative and exemplary as opposed to prescriptive and exhaustive.

a. **Student Information.**
   From what sources does the institution acquire its students? What percentage directly from high school? Community college transfers? Transfers from other institutions? What blend of gender, age group, and ethnicity has the institution attracted over time? Retained over time? Graduated over time? What is the mean measured aptitude, over time, of entering students? What are the local grade distribution trends? What changes have appeared over time?

b. **Mid-Program Assessments.**
   If the institution has some kind of required writing course or an emphasis on writing across the curriculum, what evidence is there that students are better writers after having been exposed
to the course or curriculum? How are these judgments rendered? If student writing improves, do students appear to retain this newly acquired proficiency? If so, why, and if not, why not? What changes are planned as a result of the assessment exercise?

A required course, program, or sequence in mathematics can be assessed in a similar fashion. What evidence is there that the skills improved or declined as a result of the program? How are these judgments rendered? Does the improvement appear permanent or transitory? How has the program been changed as a result of the assessment program?

A required course, program, or sequence in any subject matter can be addressed in a similar fashion, as can nearly any part of the program in general education or the program as a whole.

c. **End of Program Assessment.**
   What percentage of those students who enter an institution graduate? Is the percentage increasing or decreasing? Why? What is the mean number of years in which students graduate? Is that mean increasing or decreasing? Why? What are the criteria for these judgments? What is the several-year retention pattern from one class to the next, such as freshman to sophomore? If patterns reflect significant losses between one level and another, what are the reasons? Similar questions may be asked by gender and/or ethnic background. If the institution or program requires a capstone experience at the end of the curriculum, are present students performing better or worse than their predecessors? What are the reasons? What are the bases for the judgments? (e.g. “The cumulative judgment of the faculty is that the quality of the senior theses in art has improved during the past five years. This judgment is based upon the following evidence . . .” or “The Psychology Department requires the advanced test on the Graduate Record Examination of all graduates. These scores have declined by an average of 2% each year for the past five years. The faculty is of the opinion that the reasons for this decline are . . .”)

d. **Program Review and Specialized Accreditation.**
   Some institutions require periodic program review of each academic program, either through an institutionally approved internal process and/or through seeking and achieving specialized accreditation, or by utilizing external experts. Either or both of these activities can provide a wealth of outcomes assessment data, particularly if the methodology remains somewhat standardized over time.

e. **Alumni Satisfaction and Loyalty.**
   A number of institutions engage in a variety of alumni surveys which elicit, over time, the judgments of alumni of the efficacy of their educational experience in a program or at an institution. Use of such a mechanism can assist an institution in understanding whether alumni satisfaction with various aspects of the educational program, particularly those facets which the institution stresses, appears to be growing or diminishing over time. If satisfaction is increasing, why? If decreasing, why? What are the bases for the judgments? What curricular implications do these findings have?

f. **Dropouts/Non-completers.**
   What methods has the institution utilized to determine the reasons why students drop out or otherwise do not complete a program once they have enrolled in it? What is the attrition rate over the past five years? Is it increasing or decreasing? What are the reasons? What programs or efforts does the institution engage to enhance student retention? Which tactics have proved to be effective?
g. **Employment and/or Employer Satisfaction Measures.**
   One relatively straightforward outcomes measure used by some institutions concerns that number and/or percentage of former students who have sought and found employment. Are they happy with what they have found? Do they think the program prepared them well for their chosen occupations? If trained in a particular area, teacher education, for example, have they found a teaching position?

   Other institutions have found qualitative comments of frequent employers to be particularly helpful in assessing educational outcomes. Do the employers regularly recruit program graduates? Why or why not? How well do program graduates perform in comparison with graduates from other similar programs? Are there areas of the curriculum in which program graduates are particularly well prepared? Which areas? Why is preparation judged to be particularly good? Where are the weaknesses? Why? What is being done to provide remedial activity?

   Adopted 1992

**Policy 2.3 Credit for Prior Experiential Learning**

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities recognizes the validity of granting credit for prior experiential learning, provided the practice is carefully monitored and documented. Credit for prior experiential learning may be offered under the conditions enumerated below. This policy is not designed to apply to such practices as CLEP, Advanced Placement, or ACE-evaluated military credit. Credit for courses taken from non-accredited institutions must be addressed pursuant to Policy 2.5 *Transfer and Award of Academic Credit.*

a. Policies and procedures for awarding experiential learning credit must be adopted, described in appropriate institutional publications, and reviewed at regular intervals.

b. Credit for prior experiential learning may be granted only at the undergraduate level.

c. Credit may be granted only upon the recommendation of teaching faculty who are appropriately qualified and who are on a regular appointment with the college on a continuing basis.

d. Credit may be granted only for documented learning which ties the prior experience to the theories and data of the relevant academic fields.

e. Credit may be granted only for documented learning which falls within the regular curricular offerings of the institution.

f. An institution that uses documentation and interviews in lieu of examinations must demonstrate in its self-study that the documentation provides the academic assurances of equivalence to credit earned by traditional means.

g. Credit for prior experiential learning should not constitute more than 25% of the credits needed for a degree or certificate.

h. No assurances are made as to the number of credits to be awarded prior to the completion of the institution’s review process.
i. Credit may be granted only to enrolled students and is to be identified on the student’s transcript as credit for prior experiential learning.

j. Policies and procedures must ensure that credit for prior experiential learning does not duplicate other credit awarded.

k. Adequate precautions must be provided to ensure that payment of fees does not influence the award of credit.

Adopted 1988

Policy 2.4 Study Abroad Programs

Study abroad can be an important phase of undergraduate and graduate programs in American colleges and universities. Carefully planned and administered, foreign study may add significant dimensions to a student’s educational experience. As guidelines for institutions which conduct programs of foreign study or whose students participate in such programs, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities urges that a study abroad program should:

a. be clearly related to the mission and goals of the sponsoring or participating institution;

b. have a well-defined rationale stating the specific nature and purposes of the program, and be accurately represented in the institution’s catalog and all promotional literature;

c. provide educational experiences related to the institution’s curriculum;

d. be available to students carefully selected according to ability and interest;

e. have a carefully articulated policy regarding the availability of financial assistance to students for programs required by the institution;

f. have clearly specified language proficiency requirements when appropriate to the program and place of study, and clearly defined methods of testing proficiency prior to acceptance into the program;

g. provide extensive information to intended participants, honestly and specifically describing the program’s opportunities and limitations, indicating how and where instruction will be given and the relationship to the foreign institution, describing grading practices, identifying especially significant differences between a home campus experience and what can be expected abroad, including information about local living conditions and the extent of responsibility assumed by the program for housing participants;

h. provide extensive orientation for participants prior to departure for, and on arrival in, the foreign country with respect to the matters in item g above, augmented with more detailed information and instruction related to the specific program;

i. have a resident director carefully selected on the basis of professional competence and interest, appointed for a minimum of two years with provision for overlapping replacement appointments
to allow for transition, and assured of the same professional rights, privileges, and consideration
as colleagues on the home campus, with due respect for the responsibilities of the overseas
assignment;

ej. provide counseling and supervisory services at the foreign center, with special attention to
problems peculiar to the location and nature of the program;

k. guarantee adequate basic reference materials to offset any limitations of local libraries or
inaccessibility to them;

l. include clearly defined criteria and policies for judging performance and assigning credit in
accordance with prevailing standards and practices at the home institution; where several
institutions are involved with a single overseas institution or in a consortium, a common basis
for determining grade equivalents is essential;

m. stipulate that students will ordinarily not receive credit for foreign study undertaken without
prior planning or approval on the students’ home campuses;

n. include provisions for regular follow-up studies on the individual and institutional benefits
derived from such programs; and

o. ensure fair reimbursement to participants if the program is not delivered as promised for reasons
within the sponsor’s control.

Cooperative arrangements are urged among American institutions seeking to provide foreign study
opportunities for their students. In many cases, resident directors, faculty, and facilities could be
shared, resulting in significant improvement in the efficiency and economy of the operation. One
basic reference collection, for example, supported and used by students from several programs is
likely to be more satisfactory than several separate ones.

Travel programs per sé or commercially sponsored “study-travel programs” should be thoroughly
investigated by an institution before granting degree credit for these activities. The regional
accrediting commissions do not evaluate these activities as foreign study programs of member
institutions, nor will they evaluate independent foreign study programs which are not related to
the curricula of specific colleges or universities in the United States.

Adopted 1972

**Policy 2.5 Transfer and Award of Academic Credit**

This statement is directed to institutions of higher education and others concerned with the transfer
of academic credit among institutions and award of academic credit for extra-institutional learning.
Basic to this statement is the principle that each institution is responsible for determining its own
policies and practices with regard to the transfer and award of credit. Institutions are urged to review
their policies and practices periodically to ensure that they accomplish the institution’s goals and that
they function in a manner that is fair and equitable to students. Any statements, this one or others
referred to, should be used as guides, not as substitutes, for institutional policies and practices.
Transfer of credit is a concept that now involves transfer between dissimilar institutions and curricula and recognition of extra-institutional learning, as well as transfer between institutions and curricula of similar characteristics. As their personal circumstances and educational objectives change, students seek to have their learning, wherever and however attained, recognized by institutions where they enroll for further study. It is important for reasons of social equity and educational effectiveness, as well as for the wise use of resources, for all institutions to develop reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for acceptance of transfer of credit. Such policies and procedures should provide maximum consideration for the individual student who has changed institutions or objectives. It is the receiving institution’s responsibility to provide reasonable and definitive policies and procedures for determining a student’s knowledge in required subject areas. All institutions have a responsibility to furnish transcripts and other documents necessary for a receiving institution to judge the quality and quantity of the work. Institutions also have the responsibility to advise the students that the work reflected on the transcript may or may not be accepted by a receiving institution.

Interinstitutional Transfer of Credit. Transfer of credit from one institution to another involves at least three considerations:

1. The educational quality of the institution from which the student transfers.

2. The comparability of the nature, content, and level of credit earned to that offered by the receiving institution.

3. The appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned to the programs offered by the receiving institution, in light of the student’s educational goals.

Accredited Institutions. Accreditation speaks primarily to the first of these considerations, serving as the basic indicator that an institution meets certain minimum standards. Users of accreditation are urged to give careful attention to the accreditation conferred by accrediting bodies recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). CHEA has a formal process of recognition which requires that any accrediting body so recognized must meet the same standards. Under these standards CHEA has recognized a number of accrediting bodies, including:

1. Regional accrediting commissions which accredit total institutions.

2. Certain national accrediting bodies that accredit various kinds of specialized institutions.

3. Certain specialized organizations that accredit free-standing professional schools, in addition to programs within multi-purpose institutions.

The American Council on Education annually publishes for CHEA a list of recognized accrediting bodies, as well as a directory of institutions accredited by these organizations. This publication, Accredited Institutions of Postsecondary Education, Programs and Candidates, may be ordered from Praeger Publishers (an imprint of Green Publishing Group, Inc.), 88 Post Road West, Westport, CT 06881-5007, telephone (203) 226-3571 or (800) 225-5800, website: http://www.greenwood.com.

Although accrediting agencies vary in the ways they are organized and in their statements of scope and mission, all accrediting bodies that meet CHEA’s standards for recognition function to ensure that the institutions or programs they accredit have met generally accepted minimum standards for accreditation.
Accreditation affords reason for confidence in an institution’s or a program’s purposes, in the appropriateness of its resources and plans for carrying out these purposes, and in its effectiveness in accomplishing its goals, insofar as these things can be judged. Accreditation speaks to the probability but does not guarantee that students have met acceptable standards of educational accomplishment.

Comparability and Applicability. Comparability of the nature, content, and level of transfer credit and the appropriateness and applicability of the credit earned in programs offered by the receiving institution are as important in the evaluation process as the accreditation status of the institution at which the transfer credit was awarded. Since accreditation does not address these questions, this information must be obtained from catalogs and other materials and from direct contact between knowledgeable and experienced faculty and staff at both the receiving and sending institutions. When such considerations as comparability and appropriateness of credit are satisfied, however, the receiving institution should have reasonable confidence that students from accredited institutions are qualified to undertake the receiving institution’s educational program.

Admissions and Degree Purposes. At some institutions there may be differences between the acceptance of credit for admission purposes and the applicability of credit for degree purposes. A receiving institution may accept previous work, place a credit value on it, and enter it on the transcript. However, that previous work, because of its nature and not its inherent quality, may be determined to have no applicability to a specific degree to be pursued by the student.

Institutions have a responsibility to make this distinction and its implications clear to students before they enroll. This should be a matter of full disclosure, with the best interests of the student in mind. Institutions also should make every reasonable effort to reduce the gap between credits accepted and credits applied toward an educational credential.

Unaccredited Institutions. Higher education Institutions that are not accredited by CHEA-recognized accrediting bodies may lack that status for reasons unrelated to questions of quality. Such institutions, however, cannot provide a reliable, third-party assurance that they meet or exceed minimum standards. That being the case, students transferring from such institutions may encounter special problems in gaining admission and in transferring credits to accredited institutions. Institutions admitting students from unaccredited institutions should take special steps to validate credits previously earned.

Foreign Institutions. In most cases, foreign institutions are chartered and authorized by their national governments, usually through a ministry of education or head of state. Although this provides for a standardization within a country, it does not produce useful information about comparability from one country to another. Two organizations assist institutions by providing information or guidelines on admissions and course placement of international students: the Foreign Educational Credential Service of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) and the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA) Association of International Educators. Equivalency or placement recommendations are to be evaluated in terms of programs and policies of the individual receiving institution.

Validation of Extra-Institutional and Experiential Learning for Transfer Purposes. Transfer-of-credit policies should encompass educational accomplishment attained in extra-institutional settings as well as at accredited higher education institutions. In deciding on the award of credit for extra-institutional learning, institutions will find the services of the American Council on Education’s College Credit
Recommendation Service (CREDIT) helpful. One of the Office’s functions is to operate and foster programs to determine credit equivalencies for various modes of extra-institutional learning. CREDIT maintains evaluation programs for formally structured courses offered by the military and civilian non-collegiate sponsors such as business, corporations, government agencies, and labor unions. Evaluation services are also available for examination programs for occupations with validated job proficiency evaluation systems, and for correspondence courses offered by schools accredited by the Distance Education and Training Council. The results are published in a Guide series. Another resource is the General Education Development (GED) Testing Program, which provides a means for assessing high school equivalency.

For learning that has not been validated through the ACE formal credit recommendation process or through credit-by-examination programs, institutions are urged to explore the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) procedures and processes. Pertinent CAEL publications designed for this purpose are available. (See Policy 2.3 Credit for Prior Experiential Learning).

Uses of this Statement. This statement has been endorsed by the national associations most concerned with practices in the area of transfer and award of credit - the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers, the American Council on Education/Commission on Adult Learning and Educational Credentials, and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Institutions are encouraged to use this statement as a basis for discussions in developing or reviewing institutional policies with regard to transfer. If the statement reflects an institution’s policies, that institution might want to use this publication to inform faculty, staff, and students.

Adopted 1977

Policy 2.6 Distance Delivery of Courses, Certificate, and Degree Programs

Introduction. This policy is intended to apply to the broadest possible definition of distance delivery of instruction, including telecommunications technologies — audio, video, and computer-based technologies — used for instruction in either live or stored modes. The degree program and credit courses may or may not be delivered exclusively via telecommunications; for example, the course may include a print component and a degree program may include an on-campus requirement.

The existence of these requirements for instruction via telecommunications does not relieve an accredited institution of the obligation to meet the Eligibility Requirements, standards, and policies of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The institution’s programs with specialized accreditation meet the same requirements when offered through distance delivery. Applicable institutional accreditation standards and the Commission’s substantive change policy apply regardless of when, where, or how instruction takes place, or by whom taught.

Application of Requirements. These requirements are to be addressed in the periodic review — self-study and peer evaluation — conducted for reaffirmation of accreditation by every accredited institution that engages in distance delivery through telecommunications. For the institution that proposes to initiate distance learning through telecommunications, these requirements will form the framework for a substantive change review by the Commission.
Definition. Distance education is defined, for the purposes of accreditation review, as a formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education may employ correspondence study, or audio, video or electronically mediated technologies.

Institutions offering courses, certificate and degree programs at a distance for academic credit are expected to address in their self-studies and/or proposals for institutional change (Policy A-2 Substantive Change). The following requirements will be reviewed as appropriate by the Commission.

Requirements

Approval and Purpose

a. The institution’s distance delivery programs have a clearly defined purpose congruent with institutional mission and purposes.

b. Each program has been approved through established institutional program approval mechanisms.

Curriculum and Instruction

c. Programs provide for timely and appropriate interaction between students and faculty, and among students.

d. The institution’s faculty assumes responsibility for and exercises oversight over distance education, ensuring both the rigor of programs and the quality of instruction.

e. The institution ensures that the technology used is appropriate to the nature and objectives of the programs.

f. The institution ensures the currency of materials, programs and courses.

g. The institution’s distance education policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, faculty compensation, copyright issues, and the utilization of revenue derived from the creation and production of software, telecourses or other media products.

h. The institution provides appropriate faculty support services specifically related to distance education.

i. The institution provides appropriate training for faculty who teach in distance education programs.
Library and Information Resources

j. The institution ensures that students have access to and can effectively use appropriate library resources.

k. The institution monitors whether students make appropriate use of learning resources.

l. The institution provides laboratories, facilities, and equipment appropriate to the courses or programs.

Faculty Support

m. Training is provided for faculty who teach via electronic delivery.

n. The institution has faculty support services specifically related to teaching via electronic delivery.

Student Services

o. The institution provides adequate access to the range of student services appropriate to support the programs, including admissions, financial aid, academic advising, delivery of course materials, and placement and counseling.

p. The institution provides an adequate means for resolving student complaints.

q. The institution provides to students advertising, recruiting and admissions information that adequately and accurately represents the programs, requirements, and services available.

r. The institution ensures that students admitted possess the knowledge and equipment necessary to use the technology employed in the program, and provides aid to students who are experiencing difficulty using the required technology.

Facilities and Finances

s. The institution possesses the equipment and technical expertise required for distance education.

t. The institution’s long-range planning, budgeting, and policy development processes reflect the facilities, staffing, equipment and other resources essential to the viability and effectiveness of the distance education program.

Commitment to Support

u. The institution offering the program demonstrates a commitment to ongoing support, both financial and technical, and to continuation of the program for a period sufficient to enable enrolled students to complete the degree or certificate.

Evaluation and Assessment

v. The institution assesses student capability to succeed in distance education programs and applies this information to admission and recruitment policies and decisions.
w. The institution evaluates the educational effectiveness of its distance education programs (including assessments of student learning outcomes, student retention, and student satisfaction) to ensure comparability to campus-based programs.

x. The institution ensures the integrity of student work and the credibility of the degrees and credits it awards.

Adopted 1996/Revised 1998

**Supporting Documentation for Standard Two**

**General Requirements and Undergraduate Program**

Required Documentation:

1. Instruments and procedures used to measure educational program effectiveness.

2. Inventory of documents that demonstrate the appraisal of educational program outcomes. The documents are to be available on campus for examination by the evaluation committee. Examples may include:
   - annual goals and assessment of success in their accomplishment;
   - studies of alumni and former students;
   - studies regarding effectiveness of programs and their graduates;
   - test comparisons that reveal beginning and ending competencies;
   - surveys of student satisfaction.

3. Inventory of degree programs that have been added or deleted in the last five years.

4. Number of degrees granted in each program for the last three years.

5. Published statements or other written rationale for the general education program.

Required Exhibits:

1. Statement of degree objectives for each degree program.

2. Description of curriculum development bodies and advisory groups, with rules of procedure and recent minutes.

3. Complete departmental or program self-studies prepared for part of this self-study.

4. Evaluation forms and summary reports of student evaluations of faculty and courses.

5. Self-study and evaluation committee reports from external reviews and the most recent professional accreditation visits and documentation of resulting actions.
6. Criteria and procedures for admission and retention of students, maintenance of student records, and awarding of credit, including credit for prior experiential learning.

7. Policies regarding transfer of credit, including articulation agreements with other institutions.

8. Policies regarding remedial work.

9. Description of the materials and forms used in the academic advisement process.

10. Grade distribution studies.


Suggested Materials:

1. Compilation of entering freshman student ability measures.

2. Samples of course examinations and other instruments used to assess student achievement or competency and, when possible, available work products determined to be of different levels of quality.

3. Funds devoted to research, if applicable, for each of the past three years; principal sources of such funds.

**Graduate Program**

Required Documentation:

1. Copy of the Graduate Catalog.

2. The information specified below is to be summarized separately, or, if it is contained in the Graduate Catalog, identified by page number(s):
   - all graduate degrees offered;
   - general graduate admissions requirements for master’s degrees including the use of standardized tests, and special requirements by schools, departments, or degree programs if substantially different;
   - general graduate admissions requirements for doctoral degrees including the use of standardized tests, and special requirements by schools, departments, or degree programs if substantially different;
   - general graduation requirements for advanced degrees and special requirements by schools, departments, or degree programs if substantially different; and
   - graduate faculty by schools or program.

3. Inventory of documents or studies that demonstrate the assessment of outcomes for graduate programs. Examples on file for review by the evaluation committee may include:
• studies of graduates or former students;
• studies that indicate the degree of success with graduates obtaining employment in fields relevant to their graduate education;
• surveys of student satisfaction;
• review of internal program;
• surveys of employer satisfaction; and
• results of national ranking data.

Required Exhibits:

1. Policy on the acceptance of graduate credit, including transfer credit.

2. Policy on the granting of credit for internships, field experience, or clinical practice.

**Continuing Education and Special Learning Activities**

Required Documentation:

1. Organizational charts which show the relationship of continuing education to various academic units of the institution, including the internal organization of the continuing education unit.

2. Summary listing of off-campus programs, directors, sites, and enrollments.

3. Policy and procedures for institutional approval of off-campus and special programs and courses.

Required Exhibits:

1. Catalogs, brochures, announcements, and class schedules for special programs.

2. Policies regarding the award of credit based on prior experiential learning, including the distribution of credits, by term, for the past two years.

3. Policies that address all items of Standard Indicator 2.A.10 regarding award of credit.

4. List of all courses and programs taught by nontraditional instructional formats for the past three years, indicating the course, type and duration of instruction, number of credits, enrollment, and location.

5. Budgetary information and financial arrangements relating to continuing education and special learning activities.

6. Studies demonstrating comparability of outcomes for courses or programs offered under concentrated or accelerated time frames, or other nontraditional instructional formats.
7. Policies regarding admission, transfer of prior earned credit, credit by examination (e.g. College Level Examination Program [CLEP]), credit for prior experiential learning, credit by evaluation and residency requirements as they apply to external degrees, degree-completion programs, or special degrees.

8. Sample transcript with explanation of codes showing designations for credit for prior experiential learning and non-degree credit.

9. Contractual agreements with other institutions or travel agencies.

10. Criteria and procedures for admission of students and awarding of credit; procedures for maintenance of student records.

11. Catalogs, brochures, and announcements for continuing education courses and programs, and special learning activities.

12. Criteria and procedures for registration of students and awarding of units; procedures for keeping student records.

13. Procedures for involving appropriate institutional personnel in program approval and development.
Standard Three - Students

Standard 3.A - Purpose and Organization

Student programs and services support the achievement of the institution’s mission and goals by contributing to the educational development of its students. Student programs and services are consistent with the educational philosophy of the institution. The institution provides essential support services for students, regardless of where or how enrolled and by whatever means educational programs are offered.

3.A.1 The organization of student services is effective in providing adequate services consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.

3.A.2 Student services and programs are staffed by qualified individuals whose academic preparation and/or experience are appropriate to their assignments. Assignments are clearly defined and published. The performance of personnel is regularly evaluated.

3.A.3 Appropriate policies and procedures for student development programs and services are established. The objectives of each operating component are compatible and support the goals of student services.

3.A.4 Human, physical, and financial resources for student services and programs are allocated on the basis of identified needs and are adequate to support the services and programs offered.

Standard 3.B - General Responsibilities

The institution provides student services and programs based upon an assessment of student needs, provides adequate support for the services offered to achieve established goals, and adopts, publishes, and makes available policies that are accurate and current.

3.B.1 The institution systematically identifies the characteristics of its student population and students’ learning and special needs. The institution makes provision for meeting those identified needs, emphasizing students’ achievement of their educational goals.

3.B.2 The institution provides opportunities for students to participate in institutional governance. Faculty are involved in the development of policies for student programs and services.

3.B.3 Policies on students’ rights and responsibilities, including those related to academic honesty and procedural rights, are clearly stated, well publicized, readily available, and implemented in a fair and consistent manner.

3.B.4 The institution makes adequate provision for the safety and security of its students and their property. Information concerning student safety is published and widely distributed.
3.B.5 The institution publishes and makes available to both prospective and enrolled students a catalog or bulletin that describes: its mission, admission requirements and procedures, students’ rights and responsibilities, academic regulations, degree-completion requirements, credit courses and descriptions, tuition, fees and other charges, refund policy, and other items relative to attending the institution or withdrawing from it. In addition, a student handbook or its equivalent is published and distributed. A student handbook normally will include information on student conduct, a grievance policy, academic honesty, student government, student organizations and services, and athletics. The student handbook may be combined with the institution’s catalog.

3.B.6 The institution periodically and systematically evaluates the appropriateness, adequacy, and utilization of student services and programs and uses the results of the evaluation as a basis for change.

**Standard 3.C - Academic Credit and Records**

Evaluation of student learning or achievement, and the award of credit, are based upon clearly stated and distinguishable criteria. Academic records are accurate, secure, and comprehensive.

3.C.1 Evaluation of student learning or achievement, and the award of credit, are based upon clearly stated and distinguishable criteria. Academic records are accurate, secure, and comprehensive. Credit is defined and awarded consonant with the Glossary definition.

3.C.2 Criteria used for evaluating student performance and achievement including those for theses, dissertations, and portfolios, are appropriate to the degree level, clearly stated and implemented.

3.C.3 Clear and well-publicized distinctions are made between degree and non-degree credit. Institutional publications and oral representations explicitly indicate if credit will not be recognized toward a degree, or if special conditions exist before such credit will be recognized. Any use of such terms as extension credit, X credit, continuing education credit, is accompanied by clear statements regarding the acceptability of such credit toward degrees offered by that institution. Student transcripts clearly note when any credit awarded is non-degree credit. Whenever institutions grant non-degree credit other than the Continuing Education Unit (CEU), some summary evaluation of student performance beyond mere attendance is available.

3.C.4 Transfer credit is accepted from accredited institutions or from other institutions under procedures which provide adequate safeguards to ensure high academic quality and relevance to the students’ programs. Implementation of transfer credit policies is consistent with 2.C.4 as well as Policy 2.5 Transfer and Award of Academic Credit. The final judgment for determining acceptable credit for transfer is the responsibility of the receiving institution.

3.C.5 The institution makes provision for the security of student records of admission and progress. Student records, including transcripts, are private, accurate, complete, and permanent. They are protected by fire-proof and otherwise safe storage and are backed by duplicate files. Data and records maintained in computing systems have adequate security and provision for recovery in the event of disaster. The information-release policy respects the right of individual privacy and ensures the confidentiality of records and files.
Standard 3.D - Student Services

The institution recruits and admits students qualified to complete its programs. It fosters a supportive learning environment and provides services to support students’ achievement of their educational goals.

3.D.1 The institution adopts student admission policies consistent with its mission. It specifies qualifications for admission to the institution and its programs, and it adheres to those policies in its admission practices.

3.D.2 The institution, in keeping with its mission and admission policy, gives attention to the needs and characteristics of its student body with conscious attention to such factors as ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious diversity while demonstrating regard for students’ rights and responsibilities.

3.D.3 Appropriate policies and procedures guide the placement of students in courses and programs based upon their academic and technical skills. Such placement ensures a reasonable probability of success at a level commensurate with the institution’s expectations. Special provisions are made for “ability to benefit” students. (see Glossary)

3.D.4 The institution specifies and publishes requirements for continuation in, or termination from, its educational programs, and it maintains an appeals process. The policy for readmission of students who have been suspended or terminated is clearly defined.

3.D.5 Institutional and program graduation requirements are stated clearly in appropriate publications and are consistently applied in both the certificate and degree verification process. Appropriate reference to the Student Right-to-Know Act is included in required publications.

3.D.6 The institution provides an effective program of financial aid consistent with its mission and goals, the needs of its students, and institutional resources. There is provision for institutional accountability for all financial aid awards.

3.D.7 Information regarding the categories of financial assistance (scholarships and grants) is published and made available to both prospective and enrolled students.

3.D.8 The institution regularly monitors its student loan programs and the institutional loan default rate. Informational sessions which give attention to loan repayment obligations are conducted for financial aid recipients.

3.D.9 The institution provides for the orientation of new students, including special populations, at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

3.D.10 A systematic program of academic and other educational program advisement is provided. Advisors help students make appropriate decisions concerning academic choices and career paths. Specific advisor responsibilities are defined, published, and made available to students (Standards Two and Four, Standard Indicators 2.C.5 and 4.A.2).

3.D.11 Career counseling and placement services are consistent with student needs and institutional mission.
3.D.12 Professional health care, including psychological health and relevant health education, is readily available to residential students and to other students, as appropriate.

3.D.13 Student housing, if provided, is designed and operated to enhance the learning environment. It meets recognized standards of health and safety; it is competently staffed.

3.D.14 Appropriate food services are provided for both resident and nonresident students. These services are supervised by professionally trained food service staff and meet recognized nutritional and mandated health and safety standards.

3.D.15 Co-curricular activities and programs are offered that foster the intellectual and personal development of students consistent with the institution’s mission. The institution adheres to the spirit and intent of equal opportunity for participation. It ensures that appropriate services and facilities are accessible to students in its programs. Co-curricular activities and programs include adaptation for traditionally under-represented students, such as physically disabled, older, evening, part-time, commuter, and, where applicable, those at off-campus sites.

3.D.16 The co-curricular program includes policies and procedures that determine the relationship of the institution with its student activities; identifying the needs, evaluating the effectiveness, and providing appropriate governance of the program are joint responsibilities of students and the institution.

3.D.17 If appropriate to its mission and goals, the institution provides adequate opportunities and facilities for student recreational and athletic needs apart from intercollegiate athletics.

3.D.18 If the institution operates a bookstore, it supports the educational program and contributes to the intellectual climate of the campus community. Students, faculty, and staff have the opportunity to participate in the development and monitoring of bookstore policies and procedures.

3.D.19 When student media exist, the institution provides for a clearly defined and published policy of the institution’s relationship to student publications and other media.

**Standard 3.E - Intercollegiate Athletics**

If the institution participates in intercollegiate athletics, these programs and financial operations are consistent with the educational mission and goals of the institution and are conducted with appropriate oversight by the governing board, chief executive officer, and faculty.

3.E.1 Institutional control is exercised through the governing board’s periodic review of its comprehensive statement of philosophy, goals, and objectives for intercollegiate athletics. The program is evaluated regularly and systematically to ensure that it is an integral part of the education of athletes and is in keeping with the educational mission of the institution.

3.E.2 The goals and objectives of the intercollegiate athletic program, as well as institutional expectations of staff members, are provided in writing to candidates for athletic staff positions. Policies and rules concerning intercollegiate athletics are reviewed, at least
annually, by athletics administrators and all head and assistant coaches. The duties and authority of the director of athletics, faculty committee on athletics, and others involved in athletics policy-making and program management are stated explicitly in writing.

3.E.3 Admission requirements and procedures, academic standards and degree requirements, and financial aid awards for student athletics are vested in the same institutional agencies that handle these matters for all students.

3.E.4 Athletic budget development is systematic; funds raised for and expended on athletics by alumni, foundations, and other groups shall be subject to the approval of the administration and be accounted for through the institution’s generally accepted practices of documentation and audit.

3.E.5 The institution demonstrates its commitment to fair and equitable treatment of both male and female athletes in providing opportunities for participation, financial aid, student-support services, equipment, and access to facilities.

3.E.6 The institution publishes its policy concerning the scheduling of intercollegiate practices and competition for both men and women that avoids conflicts with the instructional calendar, particularly during end-of-term examinations.
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Policy 3.1 Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status

All candidate and accredited institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising, student recruitment, and representation of accredited status. Responsible self-regulation requires rigorous attention to principles of good practice.

A. Advertising, Publications, Promotional Literature

1. Educational programs and services offered should be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.

2. All statements and representations should be clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information should be kept on file and readily available for review.

3. Catalogs and other official publications should be readily available and accurately depict:
   a. institutional mission and goals;
   b. entrance requirements and procedures;
   c. basic information on programs and courses, with required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated;
   d. degree and program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certification of completion;
   e. faculty (full-time and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the conferring institution;
   f. institutional facilities readily available for educational use;
   g. rules and regulations for conduct;
   h. tuition, fees, and other program costs;
   i. opportunities and requirements for financial aid;
   j. policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment; and
   k. academic calendar.

4. In college catalogs and/or official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information should be provided regarding:
   a. national and/or state legal requirements for eligibility for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered;
b. any unique requirements for career paths, or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.

B. Student Recruitment for Admissions

1. Student recruitment should be conducted by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution are clearly specified.

2. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes shall be governed by the same principles as institutional admissions officers and volunteers.

3. The following practices in student recruitment are to be scrupulously avoided:
   a. ensuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified;
   b. misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates;
   c. misrepresenting program costs;
   d. misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program; and
   e. offering to agencies or individual persons money or inducements other than educational services of the institution in exchange for student enrollment. (Except for awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific criteria related to merit or financial need.)

C. Representation of Accredited Status

1. The term “accreditation” is to be used only when accredited status is conferred by an accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and/or the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

2. No statement should be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by any accrediting body. Statements like the following are not permissible:
   a. (Institution) has applied for candidacy with (accrediting body).
   b. (Institution) is a Candidate for Accreditation with (accrediting body) and full accreditation is anticipated.
   c. The (Program) is being evaluated by (accrediting body) and accreditation is expected in the near future.

3. Any reference to state approval should be limited to a brief statement concerning the actual charter, incorporation, license, or registration given.
4. The phrase “fully accredited” is to be avoided, since partial accreditation is not possible.

5. When accredited status is affirmed in institutional catalogs and other official publications, it should be stated accurately and fully in a comprehensive statement, including:

   a. identifying the accrediting body as follows:

      Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
      8060 165th Avenue NE, Suite 100
      Redmond, Washington 98052-3981

   b. indicating the scope of accreditation as:

      1) institutional (regional or national);

      Example: The University of Enterprise is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, an institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and/or the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

      2) specialized (curriculum or unit accredited must be specified):

      Example 1: Programs in (Civil Engineering and Aeronautical Engineering) are accredited by the Accrediting Board for Engineering and Technology, a specialized accrediting board recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and/or the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

      Example 2: The Department of Music is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music, a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and/or the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

      Example 3: Programs for the preparation of elementary, secondary, and special education teachers at the bachelor’s and master’s level, for the preparation of guidance counselors at the master’s and specialist degree level, and for school superintendents at the specialist and doctoral degree level are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, a specialized accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and/or the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

6. The accreditation status of a program should not be misrepresented by implying that institutional accreditation extends to accreditation of individual programs by that accrediting body. Accreditation granted by an institutional accrediting body references the institution as a whole. Institutional accreditation does not extend to accreditation of any particular program in the institution. Thus, statements like “this program is accredited by” or “this degree is accredited by” are incorrect and misleading when referencing an institutional accrediting body.

Supporting Documentation for Standard Three

Required Documentation:

1. Organization chart for student services.
2. Student handbook where applicable.
3. Summaries of student characteristics that will provide a composite of the nature of the student body.
4. Student retention and rate of graduate data for the last three years. NCAA Division I Schools are to include the most recent NCAA graduation rate report.
5. Completed Table #1, Admissions Report.
6. Completed Table #2, Student Affairs Staff Profile.
7. Description of procedures for policy development including the involvement of students.

Required Exhibits:

1. Policies and procedures on: student conduct, rights, and responsibilities; student grievance process; academic honesty; athletics; student fees; tuition refunds.
2. Statistics on student financial aid such as types and amounts available, number, gender of students assisted in each of last three years, default rate on loans, etc.
3. Most recent financial aid reviews conducted by state and federal agencies.
4. NCAA Division I Schools are to include the most recent graduation rate report.
5. A copy of the mission and goals of each unit.
6. Evidence of goal attainment of each unit.
7. Evidence of the impact of student services on students.
8. Institutional publications required by the Campus Security Act, Drug Free Schools and Colleges Act, the Drug Free Workplace Act, and the Student Right-to-Know Act.

Suggested Materials:

1. List of recognized student organizations.
2. Strategic plan for student services.
4. Sample copies of student publications.

5. Brief resumes of the professional staff in student services.
Standard Four - Faculty

Standard 4.A - Faculty Selection, Evaluation, Roles, Welfare, and Development

The selection, development, and retention of a competent faculty is of paramount importance to the institution. The faculty’s central responsibility is for educational programs and their quality. The faculty is adequate in number and qualifications to meet its obligations toward achievement of the institution’s mission and goals.

4.A.1 The institution employs professionally qualified faculty with primary commitment to the institution and representative of each field or program in which it offers major work.

4.A.2 Faculty participate in academic planning, curriculum development and review, academic advising, and institutional governance.

4.A.3 Faculty workloads reflect the mission and goals of the institution and the talents and competencies of faculty, allowing sufficient time and support for professional growth and renewal.

4.A.4 Faculty salaries and benefits are adequate to attract and retain a competent faculty and are consistent with the mission and goals of the institution. Policies on salaries and benefits are clearly stated, widely available, and equitably administered.

4.A.5 The institution provides for regular and systematic evaluation of faculty performance in order to ensure teaching effectiveness and the fulfillment of instructional and other faculty responsibilities. The institution’s policies, regulations, and procedures provide for the evaluation of all faculty on a continuing basis consistent with Policy 4.1 Faculty Evaluation.

4.A.6 The institution defines an orderly process for the recruitment and appointment of full-time faculty. Institutional personnel policies and procedures are published and made available to faculty.


4.A.8 Part-time and adjunct faculty are qualified by academic background, degree(s), and/or professional experience to carry out their teaching assignment and/or other prescribed duties and responsibilities in accord with the mission and goals of the institution.

4.A.9 Employment practices for part-time and adjunct faculty include dissemination of information regarding the institution, the work assignment, rights and responsibilities, and conditions of employment.

4.A.10 The institution demonstrates that it periodically assesses institutional policies concerning the use of part-time and adjunct faculty in light of the mission and goals of the institution.
Standard 4.B - Scholarship, Research, and Artistic Creation

Scholarship, including research and artistic creation, is inherent in the work of faculty and students and is integrated in mutually supportive ways with instructional activities, regardless of the size or nature of the institution.

- Scholarship is systematic study of a chosen subject characterized by a high level of expertise, originality, critical analysis, significance, and demonstrability. Through scholarship, which may entail creation, application, synthesis, or transmission of knowledge, faculty acquire and sustain their expertise, thereby contributing to the validity and vitality of their teaching. Faculty scholarship is necessary to maintain effective instruction in all institutions of higher education. It also provides students the opportunity to observe and develop an understanding of scholarly activity.

- Research is scholarly activity directed toward constructing and/or revising theories, and creating or applying knowledge. Although not limited to graduate/research institutions, research is an essential and integral part of graduate education where it serves two principal functions: (1) it advances the frontiers of knowledge which, when disseminated, contributes to the welfare of society and ensures the viability of content in an academic discipline; and (2) it educates students in the methods of inquiry and prepares them for careers as scholars, researchers, or practitioners.

- Artistic creation is scholarly activity in the visual, performing, and literary arts that expresses original ideas, interpretations, imagination, thoughts, or feelings.

4.B.1 Consistent with institutional mission and goals, faculty are engaged in scholarship, research, and artistic creation.

4.B.2 Institutional policies and procedures, including ethical considerations, concerning scholarship, research, and artistic creation, are clearly communicated.

4.B.3 Consistent with institutional mission and goals, faculty have a substantive role in the development and administration of research policies and practices.

4.B.4 Consistent with its mission and goals, the institution provides appropriate financial, physical, administrative, and information resources for scholarship, research, and artistic creation.

4.B.5 The nature of the institution’s research mission and goals and its commitment to faculty scholarship, research, and artistic creation are reflected in the assignment of faculty responsibilities, the expectation and reward of faculty performance, and opportunities for faculty renewal through sabbatical leaves or other similar programs.

4.B.6 Sponsored research and programs funded by grants, contracts, and gifts are consistent with the institution’s mission and goals.

4.B.7 Faculty are accorded academic freedom to pursue scholarship, research, and artistic creation consistent with the institution’s mission and goals.
### STANDARD FOUR – FACULTY TABLE 1 INSTITUTIONAL FACULTY PROFILE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank or Class</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Full-Time Faculty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Terminal Degrees</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Full</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
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<td>Assistant Professor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduate Assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
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<td>Visiting Lecturer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### STANDARD FOUR – FACULTY TABLE 2 NUMBER AND SOURCE OF TERMINAL DEGREES OF FACULTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Granting Terminal Degree</th>
<th>Number of Degrees</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctor</td>
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Policy 4.1 Faculty Evaluation

As stated in Standard Four, the effectiveness and quality of an institution’s total educational program depend upon the presence of a competent faculty. Further, it is the institution’s obligation, in consultation with the faculty, to evaluate the performance of its faculty members and to provide for their development on a continuing basis.

Standard Four also calls for faculty members to be safeguarded in their exercise of academic freedom. The protection of academic freedom does not lessen the need for performance evaluation of temporary or permanent members of the faculty to ensure, on a continuing basis, the effectiveness and quality of those individuals responsible for the academic program. This ongoing evaluation may take several forms, in accordance with the size, complexity, and mission of the institution, including, for example, annual merit salary evaluations of a significant nature, promotions, and/or tenure reviews, periodic post-tenure reviews, or reviews conducted in response to some institutional need. The requirement of this policy is that the accredited institution shall conduct a comprehensive evaluation of each faculty member in a regular and systematic manner at least once within each five-year period of service. The institution’s faculty evaluation process shall contain a provision to address concerns that may emerge between regularly scheduled evaluation activities.

In establishing a program of continuing faculty evaluation and in supporting a program of faculty development, institutions shall meet the following requirements:

a. Institutions develop collegially and implement internal plans and procedures that specify the process and criteria by which faculty members are evaluated on a continuing basis.

b. Collegial participation in faculty performance evaluation is critical in order to bring subject matter and pedagogical knowledge substantively into the assessment process. Nonetheless, it is the obligation of the administration to ensure quality and effectiveness of the educational program through the evaluation of faculty performance. At a minimum, an institution’s evaluation plans must include administrative access to all primary or raw evaluation data.

c. Multiple indices are utilized by the administration and faculty in the continuing evaluation of faculty performance. Each of these data sources is to be related to the role of the faculty member in carrying out the mission of the institution. Some examples include:
   1) The evaluation of teaching through student, peer, and administrative assessment.
   2) The evaluation of the quality of scholarly performance and/or research productivity as reflected in peer judgments about publication and success in securing external funding.
   3) The evaluation of service to the profession, school, and community.

d. Where areas for improvement in a faculty member’s performance are identified, the institution works with the faculty member to develop and implement a plan to address identified areas of concern.

To conclude, the requirement for the continuing evaluation of faculty performance is to be accomplished through the joint efforts of faculty and administration. The retention of a competent faculty helps ensure that the mission of an institution of higher education is being accomplished in a manner consistent with its accredited status.

   Adopted 1992/Revised 2001
Supporting Documentation for Standard Four

Required Documentation:

1. Statistics available concerning faculty and administration characteristics, such as numbers of males and females, minorities, full-time and part-time faculty, years of service with the institution, degrees or levels of education, and years of other significant service.

2. Completed Table 1, Institutional Faculty Profile and Table 2, Number and Source of Terminal Degrees of Faculty.

3. Salary data for faculty, including compensation for special or extra responsibilities.

4. Policy and procedures on the evaluation of faculty, both full-time and part-time.

5. Representative examples of the institutional and public impact of faculty scholarship.

6. Summary of the most significant artistic creation, scholarly activity, and research by faculty during the past five years.

Required Exhibits:

1. Faculty handbook, including personnel policies and procedures.


3. Faculty committees and membership.

4. Evaluation forms and summary reports of student evaluations of faculty and courses.

5. Access to personnel files and current professional vitae.

6. Criteria and procedures for employing, evaluating, and compensating faculty in special programs such as off-campus, study aboard, travel/study, non-credit, or extension credit programs.

7. Copies of any doctrinal statements required for employment, promotion, and tenure.

8. Policies governing the employment, orientation, and evaluation of part-time faculty and teaching fellows, if applicable.

9. Summary reports of faculty involvement with public services/community services.

10. Institutional policies regarding scholarship and artistic creation by faculty and students.

11. Institutional policies regarding research activity, including sponsored research by faculty and students.
12. Summary of the faculty role in developing and monitoring policies and practices scholarship, artistic creation, and research.

Suggested Materials:

Statistics on faculty retention and turnover.
Standard Five - Library and Information Resources

Standard 5.A - Purpose and Scope

The primary purpose for library and information resources is to support teaching, learning, and, if applicable, research in ways consistent with, and supportive of, the institution’s mission and goals. Adequate library and information resources and services, at the appropriate level for degrees offered, are available to support the intellectual, cultural, and technical development of students enrolled in courses and programs wherever located and however delivered.

5.A.1 The institution’s information resources and services include sufficient holdings, equipment, and personnel in all of its libraries, instructional media and production centers, computer centers, networks, telecommunication facilities, and other repositories of information to accomplish the institution’s mission and goals.

5.A.2 The institution’s core collection and related information resources are sufficient to support the curriculum.

5.A.3 Information resources and services are determined by the nature of the institution’s educational programs and the locations where programs are offered.

Standard 5.B - Information Resources and Services

Information resources and services are sufficient in quality, depth, diversity, and currency to support the institution's curricular offerings.

5.B.1 Equipment and materials are selected, acquired, organized, and maintained to support the educational program.

5.B.2 Library and information resources and services contribute to developing the ability of students, faculty, and staff to use the resources independently and effectively.

5.B.3 Policies, regulations, and procedures for systematic development and management of information resources, in all formats, are documented, updated, and made available to the institution’s constituents.

5.B.4 Opportunities are provided for faculty, staff, and students to participate in the planning and development of the library and information resources and services.

5.B.5 Computing and communications services are used to extend the boundaries in obtaining information and data from other sources, including regional, national, and international networks.
Standard 5.C - Facilities and Access

The institution provides adequate facilities for library and information resources, equipment, and personnel. These resources, including collections, are readily available for use by the institution’s students, faculty, and staff on the primary campus and where required off-campus.

5.C.1 Library and information resources are readily accessible to all students and faculty. These resources and services are sufficient in quality, level, breadth, quantity, and currency to meet the requirements of the educational program.

5.C.2 In cases of cooperative arrangements with other library and information resources, formal documented agreements are established. These cooperative relationships and externally provided information sources complement rather than substitute for the institution’s own adequate and accessible core collection and services.

Standard 5.D - Personnel and Management

Personnel are adequate in number and in areas of expertise to provide services in the development and use of library and information resources.

5.D.1 The institution employs a sufficient number of library and information resources staff to provide assistance to users of the library and to students at other learning resources sites.

5.D.2 Library and information resources staff include qualified professional and technical support staff, with required specific competencies, whose responsibilities are clearly defined.

5.D.3 The institution provides opportunities for professional growth for library and information resources professional staff.

5.D.4 Library and information resources and services are organized to support the accomplishment of institutional mission and goals. Organizational arrangements recognize the need for service linkage among complementary resource bases (e.g., libraries, computing facilities, instructional media and telecommunication centers).

5.D.5 The institution consults library and information resources staff in curriculum development.

5.D.6 The institution provides sufficient financial support for library and information resources and services, and for their maintenance and security.

Standard 5.E - Planning and Evaluation

Library and information resources planning activities support teaching and learning functions by facilitating the research and scholarship of students and faculty. Related evaluation processes regularly assess the quality, accessibility, and use of libraries and other information resource repositories and their services to determine the level of effectiveness in support of the educational program.
5.E.1 The institution has a planning process that involves users, library and information resource staff, faculty, and administrators.

5.E.2 The institution, in its planning, recognizes the need for management and technical linkages among information resource bases (e.g., libraries, instructional computing, media production and distribution centers, and telecommunications networks).

5.E.3 The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the quality, adequacy, and utilization of its library and information resources and services, including those provided through cooperative arrangements, and at all locations where courses, programs, or degrees are offered. The institution uses the results of the evaluations to improve the effectiveness of these resources.

**Supporting Documentation for Standard Five**

Required Exhibits:

1. Printed materials that describe for students the hours and services of learning resources facilities such as libraries, computer labs, and audio-visual facilities.

2. Policies, regulations, and procedures for the development and management of library and information resources, including collection development and weeding.

3. Statistics on use of library and other learning resources.

4. Statistics on library collection and inventory of other learning resources.

5. Assessment measures utilized to determine the adequacy of facilities for the goals of the library and information resources and services.

6. Assessment measures to determine the adequacy of holdings, information resources and services to support the educational programs both on and off campus.

7. Data regarding number and assignments of library staff.

8. Chart showing the organizational arrangements for managing libraries and other information resources (e.g. computing facilities, instructional media, and telecommunication centers).

9. Comprehensive budget(s) for library and information resources.

10. Vitae of professional library staff.

11. Formal, written agreements with other libraries.

12. Computer usage statistics related to the retrieval of library resources.

13. Printed information describing user services provided by the computing facility.

14. Studies or documents describing the evaluation of library and information resources.
Standard Six - Governance and Administration

Standard 6.A - Governance System

The institution’s system of governance facilitates the successful accomplishment of its mission and goals.

6.A.1 The system of governance ensures that the authority, responsibilities, and relationships among and between the governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students are clearly described in a constitution, charter, bylaws, or equivalent policy document.

6.A.2 The governing board, administrators, faculty, staff, and students understand and fulfill their respective roles as set forth by the governance system’s official documents.

6.A.3 The system of governance makes provision for the consideration of faculty, student, and staff views and judgments in those matters in which these constituencies have a direct and reasonable interest.

6.A.4 In a multi-unit governance system (state or district), the division of authority and responsibility between the central system office and the institution is clearly delineated. System policies, regulations, and procedures concerning the institution are clearly defined and equitably administered.

Standard 6.B - Governing Board

The governing board is ultimately responsible for the quality and integrity of the institution (or institutions in the case of the multi-unit system). It selects a chief executive officer, considers and approves the mission of the institution, is concerned with the provision of adequate funds, and exercises broad-based oversight to ensure compliance with institutional policies. The board establishes broad institutional policies, and delegates to the chief executive officer the responsibility to implement and administer these policies.

6.B.1 The board includes adequate representation of the public interest and/or the diverse elements of the institution’s constituencies and does not include a predominant representation by employees of the institution. The president may be an ex officio member of the board, but not its chair. Policies are in place that provide for continuity and change of board membership.

6.B.2 The board acts only as a committee of the whole. No member or subcommittee of the board acts in place of the board except by formal delegation of authority.

6.B.3 The duties, responsibilities, ethical conduct requirements, organizational structure, and operating procedures of the board are clearly defined in a published policy document.

6.B.4 Consistent with established board policy, the board selects, appoints, and regularly evaluates the chief executive officer.
6.B.5 The board regularly reviews and approves the institution’s mission. It approves all major academic, vocational, and technical programs of study, degrees, certificates, and diplomas. It approves major substantive changes in institutional mission, policies, and programs.

6.B.6 The board regularly evaluates its performance and revises, as necessary, its policies to demonstrate to its constituencies that it carries out its responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner.

6.B.7 The board ensures that the institution is organized and staffed to reflect its mission, size, and complexity. It approves an academic and administrative structure or organization to which it delegates the responsibility for effective and efficient management.

6.B.8 The board approves the annual budget and the long-range financial plan, and reviews periodic fiscal audit reports.

6.B.9 The board is knowledgeable of the institution’s accreditation status and is involved, as appropriate, in the accrediting process.

Standard 6.C - Leadership and Management

The chief executive officer provides leadership through the definition of institutional goals, establishment of priorities, and the development of plans. The administration and staff are organized to support the teaching and learning environment which results in the achievement of the institution’s mission and goals.

6.C.1 The chief executive officer’s full-time responsibility is to the institution.

6.C.2 The duties, responsibilities, and ethical conduct requirements of the institution’s administrators are clearly defined and published. Administrators act in a manner consistent with them.

6.C.3 Administrators are qualified to provide effective educational leadership and management. The chief executive officer is responsible for implementing appropriate procedures to evaluate administrators regularly.

6.C.4 Institutional advancement activities (which may include development and fund raising, institutional relations, alumni and parent programs) are clearly and directly related to the mission and goals of the institution.

6.C.5 Administrators ensure that the institutional decision-making process is timely.

6.C.6 Administrators facilitate cooperative working relationships, promote coordination within and among organizational units, and encourage open communication and goal attainment.

6.C.7 Administrators responsible for institutional research ensure that the results are widely distributed to inform planning and subsequent decisions that contribute to the improvement of the teaching-learning process.
6.C.8 Policies, procedures, and criteria for administrative and staff appointment, evaluation, retention, promotion, and/or termination are published, accessible, and periodically reviewed.

6.C.9 Administrators’ and staff salaries and benefits are adequate to attract and retain competent personnel consistent with the mission and goals of the institution.

**Standard 6.D - Faculty Role in Governance**

The role of faculty in institutional governance, planning, budgeting and policy development is made clear and public; faculty are supported in that role. (See Standard Four - Faculty).

**Standard 6.E - Student Role in Governance**

The role of students in institutional governance, planning, budgeting, and policy development is made clear and public; students are supported in fulfilling that role (See Standard Three – Students).

**Policy 6.1 Affirmative Action and Nondiscrimination**

Educational institutions should contain within their environment the essence of the qualities they endeavor to impart, including the essential of nondiscrimination. They have a responsibility to develop selection and promotion standards and procedures based on principles which consider qualities, aptitudes, or talents simply as they pertain to the requirements of the position, with due regard for affirmative action. Institutions are expected to review their policies and procedures regularly to determine their validity in keeping with these principles.

Adopted 1973/Revised 1987

**Policy 6.2 Collective Bargaining**

The decision to enter into a collective bargaining agreement is primarily institutional, governed by state laws for public institutions and federal laws for independent institutions. The Commission takes no position on such agreements and does not encourage or discourage them.

Regional accreditation evaluates the effectiveness of an institution in achieving its stated mission and goals. Its primary concern must lie with the total institution. Whenever institutional policies and procedures are modified by collective bargaining agreements, such modification should not contravene the requirements of Commission standards, particularly Standard Four - Faculty, or unduly disrupt the educational process of the institution.

At institutions which have collective bargaining agreements, the self-study, the evaluation committee, and those responsible for accreditation decisions must address the impact of collective bargaining on the quality and effectiveness of the institution. To help achieve this result, the Commission requests:
1. Self-study participation by representatives of the entire campus community—administrators, faculty, and support staff—as well as appropriate involvement of trustees and students. Collective bargaining processes should not impede self-study participation.

2. Assessment of the impact of collective bargaining on the quality and effectiveness of the institution, both by the self-study committee and the evaluation committee.

3. Care on the part of accrediting committees in composing recommendations which may be used by either party to influence what occurs at the bargaining table. Institutional representatives are reminded that the evaluation committee recommendations must be considered, but no one of them is necessarily a mandate or an arbitrary standard.

4. Institutional effort to clarify the respective roles of faculty bargaining units and other faculty governance organizations.

5. Inclusion of bargaining agreements with documents available for visiting evaluation committees.

If an institution believes that collective bargaining negotiations will, at any specific time, impair an effective self-study or evaluation committee visit, the chief executive officer is invited to confer with the Commission’s President. In unusual circumstances, the Commission will consider a request to defer either or both processes.

Adopted 1982/Revised 1987

**Supporting Documentation for Standard Six**

**Required Documentation:**

1. Board and committee membership with a brief background statement on each board member, including term(s) of office and compensation (if any) for board service. Indicate which board members, if any, are employees of the institution.

2. Organization charts or tables, both administrative and academic, including names of office holders with a notation of any changes since the last accreditation visit.

**Required Exhibits:**

1. Articles of incorporation and bylaws.

2. Board policy manual, together with the agenda and minutes of the last three years of meetings.

3. Administrative policy manuals.

4. Administrative position descriptions.

5. Staff Handbook.
6. Salary data (including ranges if applicable) and benefits for administration and staff.

7. In multi-college systems, organization charts of central office, description of functions of central office personnel and their relationships to institutional personnel, and administrative or policy manuals of the system.

8. Collective bargaining agreements, if any.

9. Constitutions or bylaws of faculty and staff organizations, with minutes of meetings, for the last three years.

10. List of currently active committees and task forces with names and on-campus phone numbers of committee or task force chairs.

Suggested Materials:

1. Reports to constituencies, including the public.

2. Charter or constitution of student association.
Standard Seven - Finance


Financial planning and budgeting are ongoing, realistic, and based upon the mission and goals of the institution.

7.A.1 Governing boards and, where applicable, state agencies have given the institution appropriate autonomy in financial planning and budgeting matters within overall mandates and priorities.

7.A.2 The institution demonstrates that financial planning for the future is a strategically guided process. This planning includes a minimum of a three-year projection of major categories of income, specific plans for major categories of expenditures, and plans for the management of capital revenue and expenditures. Short and long-range capital budgets reflect the institution’s goals and objectives and relate to the plans for physical facilities and acquisition of equipment.

7.A.3 The institution publishes an annual budget distributed to appropriate constituencies, and the policies, guidelines, and processes for developing the budget are clearly defined and followed. Budget revisions are made promptly, and, when necessary, a revised budget or schedule of budget changes is developed and distributed to appropriate constituencies.

7.A.4 Debt for capital outlay purposes is periodically reviewed, carefully controlled, and justified, so as not to create an unreasonable drain on resources available for educational purposes. The institution has a governing board policy guiding the use and limit of debt.


The adequacy of financial resources is judged in relation to the mission and goals of the institution, the scope and diversity of its programs and services, and the number and kind of its students.

7.B.1 The institution provides evidence that it seeks and utilizes different sources of funds adequate to support its programs and services. The commitment of those resources among programs and services reflects appropriately the mission and goals and priorities of the institution.

7.B.2 Adequate resources are available to meet debt service requirements of short-term and long-term indebtedness without adversely affecting the quality of educational programs. A minimum of three years’ history of the amount borrowed (whether internally or externally) for capital outlay and for operating funds is maintained. A five-year projection of future debt repayments is maintained.

7.B.3 Financial statements indicate a history of financial stability for the past five years. If an accumulated deficit has been recorded, a realistic plan to eliminate the deficit is approved by the governing board.
7.B.4 Transfers among the major funds and interfund borrowing are legal and guided by clearly stated policies in accordance with prudent financial planning and control.

7.B.5 The institution demonstrates the adequacy of financial resources for the support of all of its offerings including specialized occupational, technical, and professional programs.

7.B.6 The institution identifies the sources of its student financial aid for current enrollments and provides evidence of planning for future financial aid in light of projected enrollments. It monitors and controls the relationship between unfunded student financial aid and tuition revenues.

7.B.7 The institution maintains adequate financial reserves to meet fluctuations in operating revenue, expenses, and debt service.

7.B.8 The institution demonstrates an understanding of the financial relationship between its education and general operations and its auxiliary enterprises and their respective contributions to the overall operations of the institution. This includes the institution’s recognition of whether it is dependent on auxiliary enterprise income to balance education and general operations or whether the institution has to use education and general operations income to balance auxiliary enterprises.

**Standard 7.C - Financial Management**

The financial organization and management, as well as the system of reporting, ensure the integrity of institutional finances, create appropriate control mechanisms, and provide a basis for sound financial decision-making.

7.C.1 The president reports regularly to the governing board about the financial adequacy and stability of the institution.

7.C.2 Financial functions are centralized and are under a single qualified financial officer responsible to the president. Institutional business functions are under one or more qualified officers, are well organized, and function effectively. The complexity of the business organization reflects the size of the institution and the significance of its transactions.

7.C.3 All expenditures and income from whatever source, and the administration of scholarships, grants in aid, loans, and student employment, are fully controlled by the institution and are included in its regular planning, budgeting, accounting, and auditing procedures.

7.C.4 The institution has clearly defined and implemented policies regarding cash management and investments which have been approved by the governing board.

7.C.5 The institution’s accounting system follows generally accepted principles of accounting.

7.C.6 For independent institutions, the governing board is responsible for the selection of an auditing firm and receives the annual audit report.
7.C.7 Independent institutions are audited annually by an independent certified public accountant and the audit is conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards. The audit includes a management letter. A summary of the latest audited financial statement is made available to the public.

7.C.8 A proprietary institution makes available annually a financial summary which includes, as a minimum, a list of company officers, a statement of profit and loss, expenditures, indebtedness, and companies which have a controlling interest in the institution.

7.C.9 If public institutions are, by law, audited by a state agency, an independent audit is not required except for any funds not subject to governmental audit.

7.C.10 All funds for financial aid and other specific programs not subject to governmental audit are audited annually by an independent certified public accountant and include a management letter.

7.C.11 The institution demonstrates a well-organized program of internal audit (where appropriate) and control that complements the accounting system and the external audit.

7.C.12 The institution demonstrates that recommendations in the auditor’s management letter accompanying the audit report have been adequately considered.

7.C.13 Federal, state, external, and internal audit reports are made available for examination as part of any evaluation conducted by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

**Standard 7.D - Fundraising and Development**

Any organized development program to seek financial support from outside sources is closely coordinated with academic planning and reflects the mission and goals of the institution.

7.D.1 All college/university fundraising activities are governed by institutional policies, comply with governmental requirements, and are conducted in a professional and ethical manner.

7.D.2 Endowment and life income funds and their investments are administered by an appropriate institutional officer, foundation, or committee designated by the governing board. The organization maintains complete records concerning these funds and complies with applicable legal requirements.

7.D.3 The institution has a clearly defined relationship with any foundation bearing its name or which has as its major purpose the raising of funds for the institution.
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*Percentage of Total Current Fund Revenues  **Most recent fiscal year for which audited financial statements are available  ***Budget for Current Year
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</table>

**Education and General**

- Revenues
- Expenditures
- Transfers - Mandatory
- - Non Mandatory
- Net Excess (Deficit)

**Auxiliary Enterprises**

- Revenues
- Expenditures
- Transfers - Mandatory
- - Non Mandatory
- Net Excess (Deficit)

**Net Operational Excess (Deficit)**

*Optional for Public Institutions  **Most recent fiscal year for which audited financial statements are available  ***Budget for Current Year
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*Percentage of Total Financial Aid  **Most recent fiscal year for which audited financial statements are available  ***Budget for Current Year
Ratios and Tables for Private Institutions

Effective with fiscal year 1995-96, most private colleges and universities were required to report financial conditions according to Financial Accounting Standards (FAS) 116, *Accounting for Contributions Received and Contributions Made*, and FAS 117, *Financial Statements for Not-for-Profit Organizations*. These standards, which are not applicable to public institutions, significantly affect the appearance of the audited financial statements that accompany institutional self-study reports. In order to enable the Commission to interpret these new financial reports, the Commission modified its financial reporting forms for private institutions and requires additional materials to be submitted with audited financial statements.

Additional Requirements for Financial Reporting for Private/Independent Institutions:

All member and candidate institutions submitting audited financial statements under FASB are also required to supply:

1. A breakdown of all net assets; e.g., unrestricted, plant, loan, life income funds, endowment funds, and agency funds.

2. A breakdown of all pledges by year of expected collection.

3. Data, if not already contained in the audited financial statement, on:
   a. Net investment in plant
   b. Unappropriated net gain on endowment
   c. Scholarship and fellowship expense funded from tuition revenue
   d. Cumulative unrealized appreciation (depreciation) of investments.
   e. Annual excess of endowment total return over (under) spending policy
   f. Maximum aggregate annual debt service

4. Copies of the institution’s Federal Form 990 (required of tax-exempt organizations).

5. For purposes of internal comparisons, certain ratios for each of the three years prior to the year of the comprehensive evaluation. These ratios are important to the Commission in determining the financial health of the institution.

**Ratio 1:**

\[
\text{Change in Net Assets - Fiscal Year} = \frac{\text{Beginning Total of Net Assets} - \text{Ending Total of Net Assets}}{\text{Beginning Total of Net Assets}}
\]

This ratio measures the institution’s performance in generating net assets.

**Ratio 2:**

\[
\text{Expendable Fund Balances} = \frac{\text{Plant Balances}}{\text{Plant Debt}}
\]

This ratio is a fundamental indication of the financial strength of the institution. A ratio of 1:1 indicates an institution has sufficient liquid assets to satisfy all related liabilities as well as Long Term Plant Debt. Thus, the institution is financially viable.
Ratio 3: \[ \frac{\text{Net Investment in Plant Balance}}{\text{Plant Debt}} \]

This ratio is useful in assessing the institution’s ability to obtain long-term financing and measuring the burden of the existing long-term debt of the institution.

Ratio 4: \[ \frac{\text{Educational Services Expense}}{\text{Educational and General Total Expense}} \]

This ratio measures resources allocated to the educational mission. The numerator includes instruction, research, and public service. The denominator is comprised of total unrestricted revenues and net assets released from restrictions.

If the institution’s internal financial reporting system does not accommodate an item in any of the ratios, the institution is advised to calculate the ratio using data as approximate as possible and to indicate where and how modifications have been made in the calculations.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STANDAD SEVEN – FINANCE  TABLE 5  UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT, TUITION AND UNFUNDED FINANCIAL AID – PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS</th>
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<td><strong>ACTUAL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Annual Undergraduate Tuition Rate</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Unfunded Financial Aid</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Total Undergraduate Headcount</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ratio of Unfunded Student Financial Aid to Undergraduate Academic Year Tuition</strong></td>
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</table>

*Use data of three years prior as base in development of 100

**Unfunded Student Financial Aid:** Refers to that portion of total undergraduate or graduate student financial aid that is purely institutional assistance. It is the amount of tuition scholarships that is awarded that is not covered by endowment earnings and annual contributions designated for tuition scholarships, federal, state, or local funding; or monies an outside group contributes for the tuition of students – e.g., Rotary, Elks, etc. It is the amount of the total tuition cash receipts generated from enrollment that the institution is willing to forego in order to attract and retain students.

**Example:** Assume an institution has available for scholarships $500,000 in designated endowment earnings and contributions; $900,000 in government aid; and $100,000 of tuition paid by outside groups. However, the institution realizes that in order to attract and retain students, it will have to award an additional $1.5 million in tuition scholarships even though it will mean foregoing $1.5 million in actual cash receipts from tuition. The $1.5 million is considered unfunded student financial aid.
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*Percentage of Total Revenues  **Most recent fiscal year for which audited financial statements are available  ***Budget for Current Year
# STANDARD SEVEN – FINANCE  TABLE 7  EXPENDITURES – PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS ONLY

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*Most recent fiscal year for which audited financial statements are available  **Budget for Current Year

Note: If applicable, explain/describe Foundation relationship and prepare separate statement for Foundation gifts to the institution.
## Standard Seven – Finance  Table 10  Capital Investments – All Institutions

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| Land              |            |             |
| Beginning Cost    |            |             |
| Additions         |            |             |
| Deductions        |            |             |
| Ending Cost       |            |             |

| Buildings         |            |             |
| Beginning Cost    |            |             |
| Additions         |            |             |
| Deductions        |            |             |
| Ending Cost       |            |             |

| Furniture and Equipment |            |             |
| Beginning Cost         |            |             |
| Additions              |            |             |
| Deductions             |            |             |
| Ending Cost            |            |             |

| Construction in Progress ✔ |            |             |
| Beginning Cost           |            |             |
| Additions                |            |             |
| Deductions               |            |             |
| Ending Cost              |            |             |

| Debt Service            |            |             |
| Principal               |            |             |
| Interest                |            |             |
| Depreciation            |            |             |

(Private Institutions Only)

* Most recent fiscal year for which audited financial statements are available  
** Budget for Current Year

✔ Briefly describe the nature of the projects under way and/or anticipated (e.g., dormitories, classroom facilities, auditorium). Also, indicate sources of funds for the project (i.e., fund raising programs, debt).
Supporting Documentation for Standard Seven

Required Documentation:

1. Completed Table #1, Current Funds Revenues - Public Institutions Only, reporting sources of operating revenue according to IPEDS definitions for the past three fiscal years and estimated operating revenue for the fiscal year during which the institution will be evaluated.

2. Completed Table #2, Current Funds Expenditures and Mandatory Transfers - Public Institutions Only, reporting operating expenses according to IPEDS definitions and estimates operating expenses for the fiscal year during which the institution will be evaluated.

3. Completed Table #3, Summary Report of Revenues and Expenditures - Public and Private Institutions, reporting the operating surplus or deficit for education and general, auxiliary enterprises, and the institution as a whole for the past three fiscal years and for the fiscal year during which the institution will be evaluated.

4. Completed Table #4, Sources of Financial Aid - Public and Private Institutions, showing the sources of financial aid for the past three fiscal years and the evaluation year.

5. Completed Table #5, Undergraduate Enrollment, Tuition, and Unfunded Financial Aid. This table is to be completed by private institutions only.

6. Completed Table #6, Revenues - Private Institutions Only.

7. Completed Table #7, Expenditures - Private Institutions Only.

8. Completed Table #8, Assets, Liabilities and Net Assets - Private Institutions Only.

9. Completed Table #9, Operating Gifts and Endowments - Public and Private Institutions (if applicable), showing a summary of annual contributions and endowment fund balances.

10. Completed Table #10, Capital Investments - All Institutions, showing your actual and projected Capital Investments.

11. If a proprietary institution, indicate the amount and percentage of income distributed to stockholders for the past three fiscal years. Estimate the amount for the fiscal year during which the institution will be evaluated.

12. A debt service schedule for the past three years and a projection for the next five years.

13. An endowment and life income fund report for the past three years showing fund balances and income distributions for each year.

14. The institution should indicate whether financial statements are provided on an accrual basis. Provide supplementary documentation of year-end accruals.

15. A list and description of financial and management reports regularly provided to the governing board.
Required Exhibits:

1. Copies of the financial section of the IPEDS report for the past three years.

2. Summary of the latest audited financial statement, a copy of the auditor’s management letter, and have available the latest complete audited financial report. Audits should include those for corporations or foundations under institutional control.

3. Detailed current operating budget, including budget for off-campus programs, summer sessions, and other special programs.

4. Current operating budgets for auxiliary organizations including foundations, business investments, or satellite corporations under institutional control, with supplemental documentation including annual reports and audits.

5. Default rate for the two most recent years as provided by the U.S. Department of Education.
Standard Eight - Physical Resources

Standard 8.A - Instructional and Support Facilities

Sufficient physical resources, particularly instructional facilities, are designed, maintained, and managed (at both on- and off-campus sites) to achieve the institution’s mission and goals.

8.A.1 Instructional facilities are sufficient to achieve the institution’s mission and goals.

8.A.2 Facilities assigned to an instructional function are adequate for the effective operation of the function.

8.A.3 The institution’s facilities are furnished adequately for work, study, and research by students, faculty, and staff.

8.A.4 The management, maintenance, and operation of instructional facilities are adequate to ensure their continuing quality and safety necessary to support the educational programs and support services of the institution.

8.A.5 Facilities are constructed and maintained with due regard for health and safety and for access by the physically disabled.

8.A.6 When programs are offered off the primary campus, the physical facilities at these sites are appropriate to the programs offered.

8.A.7 When facilities owned and operated by other organizations or individuals are used by the institution for educational purposes, the facilities meet this standard.

Standard 8.B - Equipment and Materials

Equipment is sufficient in quality and amount to facilitate the achievement of educational goals and objectives of the institution.

8.B.1 Suitable equipment (including computing and laboratory equipment) is provided and is readily accessible at on- and off-campus sites to meet educational and administrative requirements.

8.B.2 Equipment is maintained in proper operating condition, is inventoried and controlled, and replaced or upgraded as needed.

8.B.3 Use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials are in accordance with the institution’s prescribed procedures.
**Standard 8.C - Physical Resources Planning**

Comprehensive physical resources planning occurs and is based upon the mission and goals of the institution.

8.C.1 The master plan for campus physical development is consistent with the mission and the long-range educational plan of the institution, and the master plan is updated periodically.

8.C.2 Physical facilities development and major renovation planning include plans for the acquisition or allocation of the required capital and operating funds.

8.C.3 Physical resource planning addresses access to institutional facilities for special constituencies including the physically impaired and provides for appropriate security arrangements.

8.C.4 Governing board members and affected constituent groups are involved, as appropriate, in planning physical facilities.

**Supporting Documentation for Standard Eight**

Required Documentation:

Campus map, and/or, if applicable, other educational site maps.

Required Exhibits:

1. Policy statements concerning access to campus for various constituencies, visitor information, security, and public safety.
2. Schedule for replacement of instructional equipment and examples of inventories which are maintained.
3. Campus facilities master plan and accompanying maps that indicate changes over the past several years.
4. Annual and long-term plans for remodeling, renovation, and major maintenance.
5. Major property additions or capital improvements during the past three years and those planned for the next three years.

Suggested Materials

1. Space utilization studies including unit-by-unit assignments.
2. Measures utilized to determine the adequacy of facilities for the institution’s programs and services.
Standard Nine - Institutional Integrity

Standard 9 - Institutional Integrity

The institution adheres to the highest ethical standards in its representation to its constituencies and the public; in its teaching, scholarship, and service; in its treatment of its students, faculty, and staff; and in its relationships with regulatory and accrediting agencies.

9.A.1 The institution, including governing board members, administrators, faculty, and staff, subscribes to, exemplifies, and advocates high ethical standards in the management and operations and in all of its dealings with students, the public, organizations, and external agencies.

9.A.2 The institution regularly evaluates and revises as necessary its policies, procedures, and publications to ensure continuing integrity throughout the institution.

9.A.3 The institution represents itself accurately and consistently to its constituencies, the public, and prospective students through its catalogs, publications, and official statements.

9.A.4 Institutional policy defines and prohibits conflict of interest on the part of governing board members, administrators, faculty, and staff.

9.A.5 The institution demonstrates, through its policies and practices, its commitment to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge consistent with the institution’s mission and goals.

Policy 9.1 Institutional Integrity

By academic tradition and by philosophical principle, an institution of higher learning is committed to the pursuit of truth and to its communication to others.

To carry out this essential commitment calls for institutional integrity in the way a college or university manages its affairs which can be seen in the way it specifies its goals, selects and retains its faculty, admits students, establishes curricula, determines programs of research, and fixes its fields of service.

The maintenance and exercise of such institutional integrity postulates and requires appropriate autonomy and freedom.

Put positively, this is the freedom to examine data, to question assumptions, to be guided by evidence, to teach what one knows—to be a learner and a scholar. Put negatively, this is a freedom from unwarranted harassment which hinders or prevents a college or university from getting on with its essential work.

A college or university must be managed well and remain solvent, but it is not a business or an industry. It must be concerned with the needs of its community and state and country, but an institution of higher learning is not a political party or a social service. It must be morally responsible, but, even when church-related, it is not a religion or a church.
A college or university is an institution of higher learning. Those within it have, as a first concern, evidence and truth rather than particular judgments of institutional benefactors, concerns of churchmen, public opinion, social pressure, or political proscription.

Relating to this general concern corresponding to intellectual and academic freedom are correlative responsibilities. On the part of trustees and administrators, there is the obligation to protect faculty and students from inappropriate pressures or destructive harassments.

On the part of the faculty, there is the obligation to distinguish personal conviction from proven conclusions and to present relevant data fairly to students because this same freedom asserts their right to know the facts.

On the part of students, there is the obligation to sift and to question, to be actively involved in the life of the institution, but involved as learners at appropriate levels. The determination and exercise of proper responsibilities will be related to the students’ status as undergraduate, professional, or graduate students.

Intellectual freedom does not rule out commitment; rather it makes it possible and personal. Freedom does not require neutrality on the part of the individual or the educational institution—certainly not toward the task of inquiry and learning, nor toward the value systems which may guide them as persons or as schools.

Hence, institutions may hold to a particular, social, or religious philosophy, as may individual faculty members or students. But to be true to what they profess academically, individuals and institutions must remain intellectually free and allow others the same freedom to pursue truth and to distinguish the pursuit of it from a commitment to it.

All concerned with the good of colleges and universities will seek ways to support their institutional integrity and the exercise of their appropriate autonomy and freedom. In particular, the regional commissions, which have a particular responsibility to look at an institution in its totality, will always give serious attention to this aspect and quality of institutional life so necessary for its well-being and vitality.

Adopted 1966/Revised 1978

**Supporting Documentation for Standard Nine**

Required Exhibits:

1. Statements or policies on academic freedom.
2. Statements or policies on conflict of interest.
3. Policies which guarantee fair treatment of faculty, administration, staff, and students.
5. Code(s) of conduct, statement(s) of ethical behavior.
ACCREDITATION POLICIES

The next two sections of the Handbook include policies that complement and illuminate the Eligibility Requirements, Standards and related Policies, and procedures found in the preceding portions of the Handbook. Section A includes operational policies relating to institutional accreditation. Section B includes general policies on accreditation. These policies pertain to all candidate and member institutions of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

SECTION A

Operational Policies Relating to Institutional Accreditation

Policy A-1 Accreditation Liaison Officer

An Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) is appointed from the faculty or administration by the chief executive officer of each member institution to work with appropriate individuals or agencies on matters of accreditation.

In the selection of the Accreditation Liaison Officer, it is suggested that the following points be considered:

a. knowledge of the institution;
b. visibility on the campus;
c. interest in accreditation; and
d. availability of clerical resources.

Duties of the Accreditation Liaison Officer are:

a. To serve as the central agent on campus for the collection and dissemination of information about institutional and specialized accreditation.

   1) Keep on file accreditation handbooks and guidelines, self-studies, evaluation committee reports, schedules of evaluations, and copies of correspondence from accrediting agencies.

   2) Answer inquiries about accreditation and provide appropriate information.

b. To serve as the key resource person in planning the self-study for accreditation.

c. To try to develop coordinated accreditation programs and schedules if the institution is involved with specialized accrediting agencies.

d. To work with the office of the accrediting agency in making campus and local arrangements for the evaluation committee report.

e. To assist in organizing and carrying out follow-up studies and reports that might result from the evaluation committee report.
f. To prepare the annual report form that provides basic information and data.

g. To notify the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities in advance of substantive changes that are planned. (See Policy A-2 Substantive Change.)

Adopted 1974

Policy A-2 Substantive Change

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities monitors proposed changes whenever an accredited or candidate institution plans a substantive change in its mission and goals, scope, control, area served or other significant matters.

Introduction. Accreditation or candidacy for accreditation of an institution applies to those units, programs, and other institutional activities which were included in the institutional self-study and were reviewed by an evaluation committee as required by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Insofar as institutions are in a continual process of change, the Commission requires that all institutions be reevaluated periodically. Most changes, such as adding or dropping courses, developing new concentrations that are allied with existing offerings, and changing personnel, are not substantive and fall within the nature and scope of the institution as last evaluated. However, a change of such magnitude as to significantly alter an institution’s mission and goals; the scope or degree level of its offerings; its autonomy, sponsorship, or the locus of control over it; offering academic programs for credit through contractual relationships with external organizations; offering programs for credit outside the NWCCU region; or adding a branch campus would constitute a major substantive change.

Substantive changes initiated subsequent to the most recent institutional evaluation are not automatically included in the institution’s accredited or candidate status. While the decision to make changes is an institutional prerogative and responsibility, the Commission is obligated to monitor the effect of a substantive change on the validity of the institution’s accreditation status with the Commission.

Determination of Significance. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is concerned primarily with major substantive changes and relies upon the staff of the Commission to determine if a proposed substantive change is major, minor, or no change in nature. Careful consideration is sometimes necessary in deciding if an institutional change is substantive and, if so, whether it is major, minor, or no change in nature. Size, complexity, maturity, and experience of the institution in effecting significant change are important factors. Usually, it is possible for the President of the Commission to determine whether a change proposed by an institution is major, minor, or no change. If the institution disagrees with the decision of the President regarding the significance of the change, the matter may be referred to the Commission for reconsideration. A list of examples of major and minor substantive changes follows this policy.

Levels of Oversight. The Commission expects each accredited institution to meet all of the Commission’s Eligibility Requirements, Standards and Related Policies at all times. With this expectation, the Commission recognizes that institutional history and characteristics may warrant discretion in the procedures used to approve institutional changes. Level I, direct Commission oversight of institutional substantive changes, is the status granted by the Commission to all accredited and candidate institutions.
However, the Commission may grant a more general level of oversight, Level II, to institutions that qualify by maintaining internal mechanisms and safeguards thus assuring the Commission that its concerns regarding institutional change are adequately addressed in a consistent manner.

Criteria for Recognition of Level II Oversight:
Institutions qualifying for consideration for recognition of Level II oversight:

1. are accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities;
2. have not had a Warning or Probation imposed within the immediate past ten years;
3. have not been issued a Show-Cause order within the immediate past twenty years; and
4. possess a successful history of adherence to the Commission’s policy on substantive change.

Institutions shall request prior approval from the Commission to conduct Level II oversight of institutional substantive changes. In requesting approval for Level II oversight, an institution must provide evidence to warrant the confidence of the Commission that it maintains appropriate oversight policies, procedures, practices, and documentation to ensure required items a through i of the major substantive change prospectus (see Prospectus below) are consistently addressed in a satisfactory manner.

Notification. When considering a substantive change, an institution is required to notify the Commission early in its deliberations. Early notification enables the staff to provide information and advice regarding the effect of the proposed change on the accreditation or candidate status of the institution and the procedures to be followed in seeking approval.

Major Substantive Change – Oversight Levels I and II

Prospectus. In submitting a proposal for a major substantive change, the institution is required to complete a prospectus. The purpose of a prospectus is to enable the institution to set forth the activities constituting the change and the impact expected on the institution as a whole. The prospectus is to be single-spaced, printed on both sides, and submitted in six unbound copies. The Commission also requests an electronic version of the prospectus. The Commission staff will review the prospectus and request any further information that is needed. Although the scope and depth of information to be provided in the prospectus will depend upon the nature of the proposed change, responses to the following are required:

a. Mission and Goals:
   1. clear statement of the nature and purposes of the change in the context of institutional mission and goals;

b. Authorization:
   1. evidence of formal approval by the governing board and by the appropriate governmental agency to offer the proposed existing and/or new program(s) at the proposed site(s). If the institution is located in, or operates in, a state that has only minimal requirements for chartering, but also a higher level of authorization to grant degrees, approval at the higher level is required;

c. Educational Offerings:
   1. descriptive information of the educational offering(s); and
   2. evidence of approval by the appropriate academic policy body of the institution;
d. Planning:
1. plans and descriptive materials indicating evidence of need for the change, the student clientele to be served;
2. procedures used in arriving at the decision to change;
3. organizational arrangements required within the institution to accommodate the change; and
4. timetable for implementation;

e. Budget:
1. projections (revenue and expenditures) for each of the first three years of operation;
2. revenue and expenditures associated with the change itself;
3. institutional financial support to be reallocated to accommodate the change; and
4. budgetary and financial implications of the change for the entire institution.

For major substantive changes, a copy of the institution’s most recent IPEDS financial report is required.

When an institution seeks approval to establish a branch campus, the prospectus must include a thorough response to each of e.1 through e.4 above to assist in an evaluation of the institution’s fiscal and administrative capacity to operate the additional location as required by 34 CFR 602.24(a). Revenues and expenditures must include a cash flow analysis. (See footnote ** on page listing examples of major and minor substantive changes for Oversight Level I/II institutions.)

f. Student Services:
1. provision for student services to accommodate the change; and
2. implications of the change for services to the rest of the student body;

g. Physical Facilities:
1. provision for physical facilities and equipment;

h. Library and Information Resources:
1. adequacy and availability of library and information resources;

i. Faculty:
1. analysis of the faculty and staff needed;
2. educational and professional experience qualifications of the faculty members relative to their individual teaching assignments; and
3. anticipated sources or plans to secure qualified faculty and staff.

Review of the Proposal. In order to expedite consideration of a major substantive change proposal, the Commission follows these procedures:
1. member and candidate institutions may submit a proposal for substantive change at any time during the year;
2. following receipt of a prospectus, Commission staff analyze the proposal and send a copy of the analysis with a copy of the prospectus to three members of the Commission for review;
3. on behalf of the Commission, the Commissioner-reviewers consider the impact of the proposed change on existing institutional programs, resources, and services and judge whether it is reasonable to expect that the Commission’s accreditation criteria will continue to be met; and
4. Commissioner-reviewers submit their findings to the President of the Commission.
If the proposal is approved by all three Commissioner-reviewers, the institution is notified in writing to proceed with the change which is noted in the institution’s accreditation. The proposal is then noted as an information item on the agenda for the Commission’s next regularly scheduled meeting. If one or more of the Commissioner-reviewers recommend the proposal be denied, the proposal is denied and the institution is notified in writing and given the reasons for the denial.

**Request for Reconsideration.** If approval of the major substantive change is denied, the institution may provide print and electronic copies of the original or a revised prospectus and request consideration by the Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting. If the matter is considered by the Commission, one of the following actions will be taken:

1. accept the proposal without conditions,
2. accept the proposal with conditions,
3. defer action pending receipt of additional information, or
4. deny approval of the proposal.

The institution’s chief executive officer is notified in writing of the action taken by the Commission and the reasons for the action. If the proposal is approved, follow-up actions, if any, are determined by the nature of the change and any other factors deemed appropriate by the Commission. If the proposal is denied, the reasons for the denial are specified in the written notification.

**Implementation of Unapproved Changes.** If an institution implements a substantive change without prior written notice or if it proceeds to implement a substantive change denied by the Commission, the Commission may consider issuance of an order for the institution to show cause why its accreditation or candidate status should not be terminated.

**Accreditation and Informal Candidacy at a New Degree Level.** If the Commission approves a proposal to offer a program at a degree level not previously approved and listed for the institution in the Commission’s Directory, the institution is granted informal candidacy at the new degree level while retaining accreditation at the previously approved degree level(s). All other types of approved substantive change proposals are included under the accreditation of the institution.

**Follow-up Oversight.** Following approval of a major substantive change, the Commission may conduct follow-up oversight of the change. The nature of the oversight is determined by the nature of the change.

**Informal Candidacy.** When an institution has informal candidacy status at a new degree level, it is expected to conduct a comprehensive self-study of all degree levels of the institution and be visited by a full evaluation committee during the academic year following the graduation of the first class at the new degree level. The policies and procedures for comprehensive evaluations as listed in the current edition of the Accreditation Handbook will apply, and the action taken by the Commission following such evaluation will apply to the accreditation of the institution as a whole, not merely to the programs at the new degree level. The effective date of accreditation at the new degree level is September 1 of the academic year immediately preceding the academic year in which the evaluation took place.

**Branch Campus.** U.S. Department of Education regulations require an evaluation visit within six months following approval for the establishment of a branch campus by an institution with certain characteristics. (34 CFR 602.24(a)(3))
Change of Ownership. U.S. Department of Education regulations require an evaluation visit within six months following approval for change in legal status, sponsorship, form of control, or ownership of the institution including merger with another institution. (34 CFR 602.24(b))

Other Major Substantive Changes. For all other kinds of major substantive changes, the Commission may, as a condition of approval, request follow-up oversight, including the scheduling and conduct of an on-site evaluation. The nature of the change will determine the scope of any follow-up evaluation.

Onsite Evaluations. The size and composition of the on-site evaluation committee will depend on the nature of the substantive change. The dates for the on-site evaluation are set by Commission staff in consultation with appropriate institutional officials.

Report. Prior to the visit, the institution will prepare and submit a concise report that assesses the effect of the substantive change. The report need not repeat material submitted in the prospectus but should provide evidence and analysis of:

a. effects of the change on the total institution;

b. desirable revisions in the change based on the first year’s experience;

c. new program(s) not previously approved or existing program(s) offered at a new location(s),
   1. adequacy of administrative, faculty, financial, library, and facilities support for the program’s objectives,
   2. evidence for the program’s effectiveness;
   3. plans for continuing assessment of the effectiveness of the change; and
   4. impact of the change on the institution as a whole.

Minor Substantive Change – Oversight Level I

The Commission recognizes the importance of purposeful constructive institutional change and does not want to inhibit such change. The Commission also recognizes that while some changes are substantive because they affect the mission and goals, scope, or form of control of an institution, other changes are limited in nature and the procedures that apply for a major substantive change are not appropriate. When Commission staff determine that a proposed substantive change is minor in nature, the President, on behalf of the Commission, is authorized to act on the institution’s proposal.

Prospectus. A prospectus for a minor substantive change is expected to provide the same information as requested for a major substantive change (see Prospectus above). However, a copy of the institution’s most recent IPEDS financial report is not required for a minor substantive change proposal unless requested by Commission staff. Upon receipt of a minor substantive change prospectus, Commission staff analyze the proposal and send a copy of the analysis to the President who is authorized by the Commission to evaluate and take action on the proposal and the institution will be notified in writing of the resulting decision. If the proposal is approved, follow-up requirements, if any, are determined by the nature of the change and any other factors that may require further attention. If the proposal is denied, the institution may request the matter be referred to the Commission for consideration.
Minor Substantive Change – Oversight Level II

**Notification.** Prior to implementing an eligible institutional change, institutions with Level II oversight status notify the Commission in writing of the proposed change and certify that all required documentation for the change is available to the Commission for review. Commission staff review the notification with regard to the nature of change. If the change is judged to be appropriate with Level II oversight for the institution, the institution is approved to proceed with the change which will be included under the accreditation of the institution.

**Subsequent Review.** The Commission may, at any time, conduct a review of an institution’s documentation and procedures regarding Level II oversight of institutional changes. In particular, institutions granted Level II oversight status will undergo a careful review of institutional changes during regular fifth-year and comprehensive decennial evaluation visits.

**Revocation of Oversight Status.** If a review of an institution’s documentation or procedures finds inadequate or inconsistent compliance with policies, procedures, and documentation required for Level II oversight, the institution will be required to respond to the findings in writing. If the Commission does not accept the institution’s response, the institution’s Level II substantive change oversight status will be revoked and Level I oversight status will be reinstated. Following revocation of Level II oversight status, an institution is ineligible for a period of two years from the date of the Commission’s revocation action to reapply for Level II oversight consideration.

No Change – Oversight Levels I and II

**Notification.** Prior to implementation, institutions notify the Commission in writing of the proposed change. Commission staff review the notification and determine the nature of change. If the change is judged to be consistent with the institution’s existing accreditation, the institution is notified that the proposed change constitutes *no change* and the change is included under the existing accreditation of the institution. If the proposed change is determined to be major or minor in nature, the institution is so notified in writing and referred to the appropriate procedure within this policy for approval of the change.

### Examples of Major and Minor Substantive Changes for Oversight Level I/II Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of Change</th>
<th>Level I</th>
<th>Level II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Institutional mission and goals (other than minor refinements);</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Legal status, sponsorship, form of control, or ownership including merger with another institution; (visit required within six months)</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Addition of a degree program at a new degree level not listed for the institution in the NWCCU <strong>Directory</strong>; (See * below)</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Establishment of a branch campus; (See ** below) (visit required within six months)</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Offering courses/program(s) for academic credit outside the NWCCU region;</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Contractual agreement with non-regionally accredited organization for the organization to provide courses and program(s) for academic credit on behalf of the candidate or accredited institution;</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Offering program(s) for academic credit within the NWCCU region in a legal jurisdiction not previously reported and evaluated;</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Establishing a new degree program not closely related to other fields of study previously reported and evaluated;</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Offering a program or offering a degree-completion program by distance delivery; (Requires response to Policy 2.6 for first time use of a distance delivery infrastructure or for significant departure from a distance delivery infrastructure previously reviewed and evaluated.)</td>
<td>Major</td>
<td>Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. A change from clock hours to credit hours or vice versa or a substantial increase or decrease in the length of a program or the number of clock or credit hours awarded for successful completion of a program;</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>Minor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Offering program(s) for academic credit in a legal jurisdiction previously reported and evaluated, but at a new site;</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Offering a new program on a trial basis or for a limited time, such as a summer session or for a special group;</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Establishing a new degree program closely related to well-established fields of study previously reported and evaluated;</td>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* **Program**: A systematic, usually sequential, grouping of courses forming a considerable part, or all, of the requirements for a degree or credential.

** Branch Campus**: A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus and (1) is permanent in nature; (2) offers at least 50% of the courses of an educational program leading to a degree, certificate, or other educational credential; (3) has its own faculty and administrative organization; and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.
Policy A-3 Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Commission Actions

Disclosure of Accrediting Documents

The records of the Commission, including self-study and visiting committee reports, are confidential as described in Policy B-3 Code of Good Practice in Accrediting in Higher Education.

Self-study and Other Institutional Reports. Institutions are encouraged to distribute throughout the institution the self-study and other reports filed with the Commission.

The Commission, with the approval of the institution, may permit representatives from other institutions access to the self-study or other reports, if helpful to their self-study or accreditation processes. Also, with prior approval of the institution, the Commission may allow self-studies and other reports to be used by educators who are conducting research relating to the accreditation process and institutional improvement.

Evaluation Committee Reports. Institutions are encouraged to distribute the evaluation committee report widely within the college community and especially to the governing board. The institution should take special effort to avoid publication or distribution of excerpts that quote only those portions favorable to the institution or that take statements out of their context in the report. This mandate does not preclude individual schools or departments from quoting with objectivity portions relating only to them. When selective quotations are made in public documents, the institution must also indicate that a copy of the entire report can be obtained from the institution.

The Commission, as a general rule, will not release committee reports to the public. If an institution releases only selected portions of the report, the Commission reserves the right to release the entire report.

Public Statements by Institutions. If an institution uses a public forum to take issue with an official action of the Commission relating to the institution, or conducts its affairs such that they become a matter of public concern, the Commission may announce, through the President, the action taken, the basis for that action, and make public any pertinent information available to it.

Public Disclosure by the Commission About Institutions. Upon inquiry, the Commission will release the following information about accredited, candidate, or applying institutions:

1. The status of candidacy application(s) made and Commission decisions concerning those applications;
2. The date when initial candidacy was granted;
3. The date of denial or removal from candidacy;
4. The date and nature of the most recent on-site evaluation or special report, and subsequent Commission action regarding the institution’s candidate or accredited status;
5. The date and nature of the next scheduled on-site evaluation or special report required by the Commission;

6. The date when institutions were placed on Probation or Show-Cause status, denied initial candidacy or accreditation, or had their candidacy or accreditation terminated; and

7. Whether or not the institution has appealed a negative action of the Commission, and, if so, the status and outcome of such an appeal.

**Commission Decisions on Institutions**

Once the Commission has made a decision regarding candidacy or accreditation of an institution, it will provide written notification of the action to the institution within one month of the date the action was taken. Commission action with regard to institutions include:

1. Grant Candidacy or Initial Accreditation.
2. Continue Candidacy or Reaffirm Accreditation.
3. Request a Progress Report and/or a Focused Interim Report and Visit.
4. Defer action on Candidacy or Accreditation.
5. Issue or Continue Warning.
6. Impose or Continue Probation.
7. Issue or Continue a Show-Cause order with Candidacy or Accreditation to terminate unless the institution has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Commission that it has satisfied the Commission’s concerns or responded to its directives prior to a specified date.
8. Deny Candidacy or Accreditation.
9. Terminate Candidacy or Accreditation.

All of the Commission actions set forth above, except number 5, are posted to the Commission’s website, published in the Directory of Accredited and Preaccredited Institutions, and in the minutes of the Commission meeting at which the action took place. In addition, in taking any of the above actions, the Commission may impose conditions on continued accreditation or candidacy status or request additional reporting or site visits. (See Policy A-3 Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Commission Actions.)

**Negative Decisions**. Sanctions may be applied to an institution when the Commission concludes that the institution is in serious non-compliance with one or more Commission standards, policies, or eligibility requirements. If the Commission takes a negative action regarding an institution, the reason(s) will be stated in the Commission’s action letter to the institution. The intent of a sanction is to highlight the immediate need for an institution to bring itself into compliance. While the Commission has discretion to determine the appropriate course of actions, 34 CFR 602.20 provides that the Commission must require that an institution bring itself into compliance with accreditation standards and policies within a specific period which may not exceed:
1. Twelve months, if the program is less than one year in length;

2. Eighteen months, if the program is at least one year, but less than two years, in length; or

3. Two years, if the program is at least two years in length.

The nature and gravity of an institutional deficiency will determine whether or not, in the judgment of the Commission, one of the following five actions will be taken. While these alternatives are of increasing severity, they are not necessarily applied sequentially by the Commission. The Commission may apply any of these alternatives any time it takes a formal action on an institution.

**Deferral or Denial of Candidacy or Accreditation.** The candidacy or accreditation of an initial applicant or reapplicant institution may be deferred or denied as defined in the following statements:

1. A deferral is not a final decision. It is interlocutory in nature and designed to provide further guidance and time for the institution to correct certain deficiencies or supply specifically requested information.

2. A denial is a final decision that is subject to appeal under the published appeal policies and procedures.

**Warning.** When the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course that, if continued, could lead to more serious sanctions, it may issue to the institution a **Warning** to correct its deficiencies, to refrain from certain activities, or to initiate certain activities, within a stated period of time. A **Warning** does not affect the candidate or accredited status of the institution and will not be made public by the Commission.

**Probation.** When a candidate or accredited institution fails to respond to the concerns (including **Warning**) communicated by the Commission or when it deviates significantly from the Commission’s standards, policies, or eligibility requirements, but not to such an extent as to warrant the issuing of a **Show-Cause** order or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation, the institution may be placed on **Probation** for a specified period of time. While on **Probation**, the institution may be subject to special monitoring by the Commission, which may include a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and to receive special visits by representatives of the Commission. In addition, during the period of **Probation**, any new site or degree program initiated by the institution will be regarded as a major substantive change. (See Policy A-2 **Substantive Change**.) The candidate or accredited status of the institution continues during the **Probation** period.

One copy of the probation action letter will be sent to the chief executive officer and one copy will be sent to the chair of the governing board.

**Show-Cause.** When the Commission finds that an institution has not taken satisfactory steps to remove the causes for its having been placed on **Probation** or when an institution has not responded to a **Warning** issued by the Commission or to conditions imposed on it by the Commission, or when an institution neither under **Warning** nor on **Probation** is found to have deviated substantially from Commission standards, policies, or eligibility requirements, the Commission may require the institution to show cause why its candidacy or accreditation should not be terminated at the end of a stated period. In such cases, the burden rests with the institution to demonstrate why its candidacy or accreditation should be continued beyond the stated period. The candidate or accredited status
of the institution continues during the period of Show-Cause, and any new site or degree program initiated by the institution will be regarded as a major substantive change. (For further information, see Policy A-2 Substantive Change.) In addition, the institution will be subject to special monitoring by the Commission, which may include a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and to receive special visits by representatives of the Commission.

One copy of the Show-Cause action letter will be sent to the chief executive officer and one copy will be sent to the chair of the governing board.

Termination of Candidacy or Accreditation. If, in the judgment of the Commission, an institution has not satisfactorily corrected deficiencies noted by the Commission and communicated to the institution, its candidacy may be terminated or allowed to lapse or its accreditation may be terminated. In such a case, the institution must complete again the entire application process to qualify for candidacy. Termination of candidacy or accreditation is subject to appeal under the applicable policies and procedures of the Commission. If an institution’s candidacy is terminated, or if its accreditation is terminated, and if it requests an appeal, its status will continue unchanged until the appeal processes have been completed. Otherwise, its candidacy or accreditation ends on the date when the deadline for filing an appeal expires. Termination of candidacy or accreditation becomes effective July 1 following action taken at a winter Commission meeting and January 1 following action taken at a summer Commission meeting.

Notification to Appropriate State Agency and the United States Department of Education. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, within 30 days of the final decision to withdraw accreditation or Candidate for Accreditation status of a postsecondary institution, will notify the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation, other recognized institutional accrediting agencies, and the appropriate agency of the state in which the institution is based.

Within 24 hours of notification to an institution of the Commission’s final decision to place the institution on Probation or Show-Cause or to deny, withdraw, suspend, revoke, or terminate its accreditation or preaccreditation, the Commission provides public notification by posting a notice of Probation, Show-Cause, or denial, withdrawal, suspension, revocation, or termination of accreditation on the Commission’s website.


Policy A-4 Conflict of Interest

In carrying out its accreditation responsibilities, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities seeks to ensure that its decisions are based solely on the application of professional judgment to the information resulting from its evaluation procedures. Therefore, it seeks to avoid both the reality and the appearance of a conflict of interest. For purposes of this policy, a conflict of interest is defined as:

A circumstance in which an individual’s capacity to make an impartial or unbiased accreditation decision may be affected because of prior, current, or anticipated institutional affiliations(s), other significant relationship(s) or associations(s) with the institution under review.

The following are examples of affiliations that should be disclosed to the Commission and Commission staff that may disqualify individuals from discussing and/or voting on institutional accreditation actions.
Affiliations and Relationships

Disclose and Disqualify:
- Current Employee
- Former employee within five years
- Board member within five years
- Consultant within five years
- Graduate within five years
- Affiliation with another institution in the same system or the same sector within a state
- Affiliation with another institution in which it has a significant interest
- Having sought within the last five years or is currently seeking a position at the institution under review.

Disclose Only:
- Former employee more than five years
- Board member more than five years
- Consultant more than five years
- Graduate more than five years
- Having a close relative or domestic partner at an institution under review
- Having sought a position beyond five years at the institution under review

Other:
Knowledge or personal interest concerning the institution under review from whatever source, including competitive geographical proximity which might prejudice independence of judgment and decision-making.

Evaluation Committee Members. In selecting evaluation committees, the Commission avoids individuals who have, or appear to have, a conflict of interest in participating in a specific institutional review. However, the Commission also recognizes that it is not possible to be aware of all circumstances where a conflict, or the appearance of a conflict, pertains. Therefore, institutions, in reviewing proposed evaluation committees, are encouraged to bring to the attention of Commission staff any conflicts of interest or the appearance of such. Individuals invited to participate in the evaluation process are expected to decline to serve in the evaluation of an institution where they have, or where it might reasonably appear that they have, a conflict of interest; potential evaluators are expected to disclose possible conflicts or appearance of conflict to Commission Staff.

In addition, an evaluator is expected to refrain from serving as a consultant, paid or otherwise for two years. The Commission also views as conflict of interest an evaluator’s intent to use an institutional evaluation visit as an opportunity to seek employment.

Commissioners. Commission members are committed to full disclosure and restraint in any institutional consideration involving a conflict of interest. Members of the Commission will abstain themselves from deliberations or votes on decisions regarding institutions with which they are affiliated. They do not participate in discussions or vote on decisions on institutions to which they have acted as consultants or with which they have relationships or other associations where they have, or where it would reasonably appear they have, a conflict of interest. Commissioners who are uncertain regarding the possible appearance or reality of conflict of interest shall seek the advice of the Commission chair. At the request of the Commission chair, the Commission can determine the question by vote. In general, however, if there is any doubt on the part of a Commissioner, it should be resolved by the Commissioner refraining from any discussion or action relating to the institution under review.
**Commission Staff.** The Commission staff members are committed to full disclosure and restraint in any institutional consideration involving a conflict of interest. The Commission staff is responsible for managing the accreditation process and for ensuring that all policies and procedures are carried out fairly. The staff does not engage in the evaluation of institutions, nor does it take responsibility for operating the accreditation process at individual institutions. However, the staff is responsible for providing advice and assistance on request, and is otherwise involved in developing and providing services to assist institutions in structuring their own use of accreditation procedures.

Adopted 1996/Revised 2005

**Policy A-5 Public Notification and Third Party Comments Regarding Full-Scale Evaluations**

It is the policy of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, in accordance with 34 CFR 602.23, to publish the year when candidate or member institutions are being considered for initial or continuing accreditation. The Commission also provides an opportunity for third-party comment, in writing, concerning the institution’s qualifications for candidacy or accreditation.

**Procedures**

**A. Procedure for Publication by Institutions**

In accordance with Commission policy, an institution that is scheduled for a full-scale evaluation advertises to its publics that a visit is scheduled and invites their comments. Comments will be accepted only when they are submitted in writing and signed.

1. **Dissemination of notification.** In most cases, a local newspaper will be the most appropriate vehicle for an announcement of a forthcoming visit. However, the Commission recognizes that an institution’s opportunities and vehicles for reaching its publics vary from place to place. In some situations, submitting a press release to a newspaper may not ensure publication; it may be necessary for the institution to purchase space in an appropriate publication or find other means of publicizing the visit.

   Alumni magazines and campus newsletters may also be useful ways to communicate to certain constituencies. An institution with operations off-campus, including those outside the United States, should find ways to provide appropriate notification to those affected by the institution’s presence at those sites.

2. **Content of notice.** The Commission does not prescribe specific language for the public notification of impending visit. However, the Commission recommends that the institution’s announcement include the following information:

   a) the purpose of the forthcoming visit;

   b) the dates of the visit;

   c) the institution’s current accreditation status with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities;
d) the year of the most recent Commission action relating to the institution; and

e) an invitation to send comments directly to the Commission that includes the Commission’s address and the date by which comments must be received (no later than one month before the visit).

3. Timing of the notice. The notice should appear three to four months before a full-scale evaluation. The institution sends a photocopy of the printed notice to the Commission headquarters.

B. Procedure for Publication by the Commission

In accordance with Commission policy, the Commission publishes the list of institutions scheduled for evaluation through appropriate Commission publications and invites comments from third parties. Comments will be accepted only when they are submitted in writing and signed.

1. Distribution of notification. The primary means of publicizing the list of institutions for evaluation are the newsletter of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities and the minutes of the Commission’s meeting held in winter and summer each year. The Commission may also provide lists of institutions scheduled for evaluation through other means, such as letters or announcements, to specific groups such as state agencies.

2. Content of notice:

   a) the names of institutions scheduled for full-scale evaluation (i.e., initial candidacy, initial accreditation, or continued accreditation);

   b) the dates the evaluation is scheduled to begin; and

   c) the address of the Commission’s headquarters to which comments and information may be sent and the date by which comments must be received (no later than one month before the visit).

C. Commission’s Procedure for Handling Third-Party Comments

1. The office of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities will acknowledge, in writing, the receipt of all written third-party comments pertaining to an institution’s qualification for candidacy or accreditation.

2. Copies of third-party comments will be made available to members of the evaluation committee and to the institution being visited for candidacy or accreditation at least ten days prior to the scheduled evaluation.

3. The institution being evaluated may respond, in writing, to the chair of the evaluation committee. Such response is to be provided no later than the beginning of the on-campus evaluation.

4. The evaluation committee will consider third-party comments and the institution’s written response along with all other information available during the evaluation process.
5. The Commission will maintain a file of third-party comments for each institution, and a copy of the letter acknowledging the third-party comments. These records will be maintained for at least five years.

Adopted 1996

Policy A-6 Contractual Relationships with Organizations Not Regionally Accredited

No higher education institution accredited by a regional institutional accrediting commission can lend the prestige or authority of its accreditation to authenticate courses or programs offered under contract with organizations not so accredited unless it demonstrates adherence to the following principles:

a. The primary purpose of offering such a course or program is educational. (Although the primary purpose of the offering must be educational, what ancillary purposes also provide the foundation for the program or course, such as auxiliary services, anticipated income, and public relations?)

b. Any course offered must be consistent with the institution’s educational mission and goals as they were at the time of the last evaluation. If the institution alters its mission and goals, the regional commission must be notified and the policy on substantive change applied. (How does the institution define the specific relationship between the primary and ancillary purposes and the contracted service, and how does it demonstrate its capability to attain these objectives?)

c. Courses to be offered and the value and level of their credit must be determined in accordance with established institutional procedures and under the usual mechanisms of review. (What evidence exists that established institutional procedures have been followed?)

d. Courses offered for credit must remain under the sole and direct control of the sponsoring accredited institution which exercises ultimate and continuing responsibility for the performance of these functions as reflected in the contract, with provisions to ensure that conduct of the courses meets the standards of its regular programs as disclosed fully in the institution’s publications, especially as these pertain to:

1) recruitment and counseling of students;

2) admission of students to courses and/or to the sponsoring institution where credit programs are pursued;

3) instruction in the courses;

4) evaluation of student progress;

5) record keeping;

6) tuition and/or fees charged, receipt and disbursement of funds, and refund policy;

7) appointment and validation of credentials of faculty teaching the course;
8) nature and location of courses; and

9) library and information resources.

Additional data needed would include course outlines, syllabi, copies of exams, records of students, and evidence of equivalencies with established programs.

Requirements for Contractual Arrangements.

In establishing contractual arrangements with organizations not regionally accredited, institutions are expected to demonstrate that the following requirements have been met. The not-for-profit institutions should establish that their tax exempt status, as governed by state or federal regulations, will not be affected by such contractual arrangements with a for-profit organization.

a. The Contract:

1) should be executed only by duly designated officers of the institutions and their counterparts in the contracting organization. While other faculty and administrative representatives will undoubtedly be involved in the contract negotiations, care should be taken to avoid implied or apparent power to execute the contract by unauthorized personnel.

2) should establish a definite understanding between the institution and contractor regarding the work to be performed, the period of the agreement, and the conditions under which any possible renewal or renegotiation of the contract would take place;

3) should clearly vest the ultimate responsibility for the performance of the necessary control functions for the educational offering with the accredited institution granting credit for the offering. Such performance responsibility by the credit-granting institution would minimally consist of adequate provisions for review and approval of work performed by the contractor in each functional area.

4) should clearly establish the responsibilities of the institution and contractor regarding:

   a) indirect costs
   b) approval of salaries
   c) equipment
   d) subcontracts and travel
   e) property ownership and accountability
   f) inventions and patents
   g) publications and copyrights
   h) accounting records and audits
   i) security
   j) termination costs
   k) tuition refund
   l) student records
   m) faculty facilities
   n) safety regulations
   o) insurance coverage
b. Enrollment Agreement

1) The enrollment agreement should clearly outline the obligations of both the institution and the student, and a copy of the enrollment agreement should be furnished to the student before any payment is made.

2) The institution should determine that applicants are fully informed about the nature of the obligation they are entering into, and their responsibilities and rights under the enrollment agreement before they sign it.

3) No enrollment agreement should be binding until it has been accepted by the authorities of the institution vested with this responsibility.

c. Tuition Policies

1) Rates

   a) The total tuition for any specific given course should be the same for all persons at any given time. Group training contracts showing lower individual rates may be negotiated with business, industrial, or governmental agencies.

   b) Tuition charges in courses should be bona fide, effective on specific dates, and applicable to all who enroll thereafter or are presently in school, provided the enrollment agreement so stipulates.

   c) All extra charges and costs incidental to training should be disclosed to prospective student before they are enrolled.

   d) The institution should show that the total tuition charges for each of its courses are reasonable in the light of the service to be rendered, the equipment to be furnished, and its operating costs.

2) Refunds and Cancellations

   a) The institution should have a fair and equitable tuition refund and cancellation policy.

   b) The institution should publish its tuition refund and cancellation policy in its catalog or other appropriate literature.

3) Collection Practices

   a) Methods used by an institution in requesting or demanding payment should follow sound and ethical business practices.

   b) If promissory notes or contracts for tuition are sold or discounted to third parties by the institution, enrollees or their financial sponsors should be aware of this action.
d. Student Recruitment

1) Advertising and Promotional Literature

a) All advertisements and promotional literature used should be truthful and avoid leaving any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions with respect to the school, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates.

b) All advertising and promotional literature should clearly indicate that education, not employment, is being offered.

c) All advertising and promotional literature should include the correct name of the school. So-called “blind” advertisements are considered misleading and unethical.

2) Field Agents

a) An institution is responsible to its current and prospective students for the representations made by its field representatives (including agencies and other authorized persons and firms soliciting students), and therefore should select each of them with the utmost care, provide them with adequate training, and arrange for proper supervision of their work.

b) It is the responsibility of an institution to conform to the laws and regulations of each of the states in which it operates or solicits students and in particular to see that each of its field representatives working in any such state is properly licensed or registered as required by the laws of the state.

c) If field representatives are authorized to prepare and/or run advertising or to use promotional materials, the institution should accept full responsibility for the materials used and should approve any such promotional materials in advance of their use.

d) When field representatives are authorized to collect money from an applicant for enrollment, they should leave with the applicant a receipt for the money collected and a copy of the enrollment agreement.

e) No field representative should use any title, such as “counselor,” “advisor,” or “registrar” which may indicate that duties and responsibilities are other than they actually are.

f) No field representative should violate, orally or otherwise, any of the standards applicable to advertising and promotional materials.

Adopted 1973
**Policy A-7 Principles of Good Practice in Educational Courses and Programs Offered Outside the United States**

It is the policy of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities to require adherence to the following principles. The Commission recommends the accompanying practices to all institutions within its jurisdiction:

a. Institutional Mission and Goals

1) The international program is rooted in the U.S. institution’s stated mission and goals and reflects any special social, religious, and ethical elements of that mission.

2) The faculty, administration, and governing board of the U.S. institution understand the relationship of the international program to the institution’s stated mission and purposes.

b. Authorization

1) The international program has received all appropriate internal institutional approvals, including that of the governing board.

2) The international program has received all appropriate external approvals where required, including system administration, government bodies, and accrediting associations.

3) The U.S. institution documents the accepted legal basis for its operations in the host country.

c. Instructional Program

1) The U.S. institution specifies the educational needs to be met by its international program.

2) The content of the international educational program is subject to review and approval by the faculty of the U.S. institution.

3) The international education program reflects the educational emphasis of the U.S. institution, including a commitment to general education when appropriate.

4) The program is taught by faculty with appropriate academic preparation and language proficiencies, and whose credentials have been reviewed and approved by the U.S. institution.

5) The standard of student achievement in the international program is equivalent to the standard of student achievement on the U.S. campus.

6) The international education program, where possible and appropriate, is adapted to the culture of the host country.

d. Resources

1) The institution currently uses and ensures the continuing use of adequate physical facilities for its international educational program, including classrooms, offices, libraries, and laboratories, and provides access to computer facilities where appropriate.
2) The U.S. institution has demonstrated its financial capacity to underwrite the international program without diminishing its financial support of the U.S. campus. Financing of the international program is incorporated into the regular budgeting and auditing process.

e. Admissions and Records

1) International students admitted abroad meet admissions requirements similar to those used for international students admitted to the U.S. campus, including appropriate language proficiencies.

2) The U.S. institution exercises control over recruitment and admission of students in the international program.

3) All international students admitted to the U.S. program are recognized as students of the U.S. institution.

4) All college-level academic credits earned in the international program are applicable to degree programs at the U.S. institution.

5) The U.S. institution maintains official records of academic credit earned in its international program.

6) The official transcript of record issued by the U.S. institution follows the institution’s practices in identifying, by site or through course numbering, the credits earned in its off-campus programs.

f. Students

1) The U.S. institution ensures that its institutional program provides a supportive environment for student development, consistent with the culture and mores of the international setting.

2) Students in the international program are fully informed as to services that will or will not be provided.

g. Control and Administration

1) The international program is controlled by the U.S. institution.

2) The teaching and administrative staff abroad, responsible for the educational quality of the international program, are accountable to a resident administrator of the U.S. institution.

3) The U.S. institution formally and regularly reviews all faculty and staff associated with its international program.

4) The U.S. institution assesses its international program on a regular basis in light of institutional goals, and incorporates these outcomes of such assessments into its regular planning process.
h. Ethics and Public Disclosure

1) The U.S. institution can, upon request, provide to its accrediting agencies a full accounting of the financing of its international program, including an accounting of funds designated for third parties within any contractual relationship.

2) The U.S. institution ensures that all media presentations about the international program are factual, fair, and accurate.

3) The U.S. institution’s primary catalog describes its international program.

4) The U.S. institution does not sell or franchise the rights to its name or its accreditation.

5) The U.S. institution ensures that all references to transfer of academic credit reflect the reality of U.S. practice.

6) The U.S. institution ensures that if U.S. accreditation is mentioned in materials related to the international program, the role and purpose of U.S. accreditation is fairly and accurately explained within these materials.

i. Contractual Arrangements

1) The official contract is in English and the primary language of the contracting institution.

2) The contract specifically provides that the U.S. institution controls the international program in conformity with these guidelines and the requirements of the U.S. institution’s accreditation.

3) The U.S. institution confirms that the foreign party to the contract is legally qualified to enter into the contract.

4) The contract clearly states that the legal jurisdiction under which its provisions will be interpreted will be that of the U.S. institution.

5) Conditions for program termination specified in the contract include appropriate protection for enrolled students.

6) All contractual arrangements must be consistent with the regional commission’s document. (See Policy A-6 Contractual Relationships with Organizations Not Regionally Accredited.)

Adopted 1992
Policy A-8 Principles and Practices Regarding Institutional Mission and Goals, Policies and Administration

It is the policy of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities to require adherence to the following principles. The Commission recommends the accompanying practices to all institutions within its jurisdiction:

a. Institutional Mission and Goals

Principle: An institution’s current operation should reflect its statement of mission and goals with reasonable accuracy and should be supported by appropriate faculty and staff, programs, facilities, and finances.

Recommended Practices:

1) Document the adequacy of faculty for programs offered and monitor competency through explicit evaluation of faculty performance.

2) Encourage and assist all members of the faculty in continuous professional growth, including provision to terminate the services of faculty members who have become ineffective.

3) Implement faculty security through ethical appointment, advancement, and termination procedures.

4) Provide salaries and benefits which enable faculty to live with dignity and which are reasonably competitive with similar institutions.

5) Encourage research and scholarly/creative activity by faculty as appropriate to institutional goals.

6) Employ sufficient personnel to keep academic and support programs functioning efficiently.

7) Maintain regular and open channels of communication within the entire institutional community.

8) Develop a curriculum which is responsive to institutional purposes, faculty qualifications, and student needs.

9) Plan curricular changes on the basis of known resources, agreed-upon goals, and the strength of existing programs.

10) Own, or have at its disposal, physical facilities adequate to support institutional purposes.

11) Plan for reasonable maintenance and ultimate replacement of buildings and equipment currently in use.

12) Prepare realistic operating budgets, develop feasible funding patterns, and demonstrate fiscal responsibility in utilizing resources.
13) Have verified information available to give a complete picture of the institution’s financial position.

14) Provide and publicize an appropriate student financial aid program.

b. Institutional Policies

Principle: The policies of each institution should conform to its mission and goals, be clearly stated, easily available, and consistently made evident in operation.

Recommended Practices:

1) Publish a current catalog to give detailed information concerning admissions, curriculum, academic regulations, student costs, and services.

2) Maintain and publish a reasonable tuition refund policy.

3) Maintain records to document student achievement and institutional practice.

4) Publish clearly stated rules regarding conduct on campus.

5) Maintain an up-to-date, published compendium of policies and institutional practices which guide institutional operations.

6) Foster freedom of expression while protecting the rights of all members of the institutional community.

7) Provide explicit and fair procedures for hearing grievances and appealing administrative decisions.

c. Institutional Administration

Principle: An institution should be governed and administered humanely, responding to the educational needs and legitimate claims of the constituencies it serves, as determined by its chartered purposes and accredited status.

Recommended Practices:

1) Take action to see that there is no discrimination in the campus community based on race, religion, color, national origin, sex, or age.

2) Publish candidly any reasonable limitations on freedom of inquiry or expression which are dictated by institutional mission and goals.

3) See that the resources of the institution are focused exclusively toward fulfilling its stated function.

4) Have a capable governing board which recognizes its responsibility to the public as well as its duty to protect the institution from undue outside pressures.
5) Keep the policy-making function of the governing board clearly apart from the executive responsibilities of institutional administrators.

6) Prohibit members of its governing boards, faculty, or staff from having any financial or other interests which conflict with the proper discharge of their duties.

7) Prepare information which the governing board will need to provide overall direction, and make this information available through appropriate channels.

8) Provide capable counselors who are easily accessible to students and who make available psychological and educational tests appropriate to the institution.

9) Provide for student health services and reasonably adequate housing and food services appropriate to the size, location, and nature of the institution.

10) Make assistance available to students and alumni in securing appropriate employment.

Adopted 1980

**Policy A-9 Non-Credit, Extension, and Continuing Education Studies**

Non-credit educational courses, programs, and activities in post-secondary education have increased significantly in recent years. It is expected that an institution of higher education will play a primary role in providing relevant continuing education programs of quality for the professions, business and industry, and the public in general. They can also provide guidance to others who will be producing similar programs outside of the traditional institutional framework.

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, supportive of the important public and community service functions of higher education institutions, commends the variety of non-credit adult, extension, and continuing education opportunities provided by many accredited and candidate institutions. These are integral parts of such institutions’ total education program, designed to fulfill stated objectives and to meet their responsibilities to constituents.

Where such offerings are included in an institution’s educational program, careful attention needs to be given to developing a comprehensive record system which gives appropriate recognition to the individual student and also properly accounts for the institutional effort and resources expended.

Among the systems currently in use is the Continuing Education Unit (CEU), an adaptable unit of measure for non-credit activities. The CEU can be used to record an individual’s participation in formal classes, courses, and programs as well as in nontraditional modes of non-credit education, including various forms of independent, informal, and experiential study and learning.

The CEU or comparable measures apply only to non-credit courses, programs, and experiences, however, and care must be taken to prevent uses for which they are not intended or which would distort their limited purposes. It is especially important that the CEU or comparable units not be used to inhibit or impede educational innovation and experimentation.

Adopted 1975
Policy A-10 Postsecondary Education Programs on Military Bases

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities notes that the military services are very much aware of the critical need for well-educated manpower and fully endorses the development of educational programs on military bases designed to provide for the personal and professional growth of personnel through educational courses and programs in cooperation with accredited and candidate postsecondary institutions.

Institutions are encouraged to cooperate with the military services in designing appropriate courses and programs for both military personnel and also such military-related or civilian personnel as it may be considered feasible to accept. In establishing courses or programs, institutions should recognize that special considerations frequently must be made; e.g., courses designed for the undergraduate on a college campus or for professional preparation in an academic discipline may not adequately meet the needs or capitalize on the experiences of military personnel. The usual fixed requirements of residence and traditional methods of accumulating credits may fail to allow for the unique circumstances of the military person. Hence, it is the Commission’s view that an institution offering such courses, while holding to the basic quality essential to good educational programs, should feel free to adapt methods, policies, and procedures to the regimen and conditions under which the military student must perform his/her duties and pursue studies.

Providing educational opportunities for interested personnel on military bases is a dual responsibility. Certain guidelines and requisites can be established which may provide both incentive and direction for officers of the military in positions of responsibility on base. Likewise, there are helpful guides that might provide direction for those from the college campus responsible for such services. Successful programs in these situations will not be realized unless there is mutual understanding, a sharing of responsibilities, and a marshaling of resources essential for such offerings.

a. Guidelines for Responsibilities of Institutions

1) Programs offered should relate to the mission and goals and adhere to the educational standards of the institution.

Provision should be made for students to work toward completion of appropriate programs offered by the institution. Without compromising the principle that quality will be equivalent to that on campus, course offerings might be more flexible or nontraditional than those required of the campus student. Thus the educational goal of the military base student might be given special consideration within the general graduation requirements of the institution without depreciation of standards. Although institutions should refrain from offering work unrelated to either their mission or resources, they may provide service or cultural courses without credit when such experiences can be of personal worth or upgrade competencies required of the military person.

2) In organizing and administering base programs, institutions should take into consideration the uniqueness of military situations.

The staff member assigned the responsibility of representing an institution in its military base effort must recognize the unique demands of the situation. This person must realize that the first demand upon the base personnel is a military commitment and arrangements for such
individuals must fit into this demand. Although organization and administration practices need not duplicate or conform to campus routines, appropriate standards must be maintained.

3) Student personnel policies and services should be such as to facilitate the success of a program on a military base.

Admission requirements should reflect the demands of postsecondary studies and degree requirements and, at the same time, take into consideration the student’s background in terms of equivalencies. Registration procedures should be accommodated to the conditions under which the military work, and counseling services should be provided by relevantly prepared and experienced individuals. Special provisions should be made for program advising so students may know requirements and make adjustments in terms of their own educational goals. Adjustments may need to be made in residency requirements and/or the substitution of courses for transfer credit or degree purposes. Provision should be made for the possibility of advanced placement or credit by examination or evaluation.

4) Both faculty and instruction should be of recognized quality.

For military base education programs, the faculty are drawn from the cooperating institution, the military base staff, and from other institutions. Qualified specialists without institutional affiliation may also be employed. Instructors must be professionally competent in regard to specific preparation and recency of involvement in the field. When participating institutions employ faculty from other institutions on a part-time basis, it is recommended that they do so with permission from the faculty member’s full-time employer; this will avoid the danger of excessive overloads.

The quality of instruction should be comparable to that on campus, with the same degree of concern for teaching tools and information resources. Necessary library materials must be available or accessible. Special provisions may be needed for the completion of course work when students are called from base. Regardless of departures from campus practice, grades should not be given until students meet all course requirements.

5) Integrity is essential among institutions offering programs on a single base.

Institutions placed in competition with each other in making bids to provide services must guard against the erosion of quality of instruction. To avoid negative aspects of competition, several participating institutions on a base should consult among themselves and with the military education services officer. In all deliberations and negotiations, it is expected that a high degree of integrity will be maintained.

b. Guidelines and Obligations of the Military

1) The military should not hesitate to initiate negotiations for the purposes of providing educational programs on base.

When postsecondary educational opportunities are not being provided and when personnel on base express an interest in them, military officials should initiate the action necessary for securing such programs. The leadership should first assess and identify the types of programs and services desired before approaching an institution. It is always helpful to know at the
outset precisely what is desired, the approximate number of students that are likely to be involved, and the resources which the base might be able to provide. Education officers should be open in making needs known to interested institutions and in inviting proposals for programs. Memoranda of understanding or contracts should be negotiated directly between military bases and participating institutions. Where possible, it is recommended that such memoranda of understanding or contracts run for more than one year to ensure program stability. Perhaps bases could work toward standardization of contracts and thus ensure greater consistency in the services provided by an institution.

2) A joint meeting of both institutional and base leadership should come early.

After the educational needs of base personnel are determined, there should be a joint exploration and planning session of base and institution representatives. Such a meeting should define the needs, identify essential resources, describe the general nature of programs desired, and define the specific responsibilities of all parties. Written agreements should be reached prior to the initiation of the program to guide both the base and the participating institution in carrying out the program.

3) The military will have responsibility for supplying certain essential resources.

In addition to identifying programs desired, the number of persons involved, and the costs, the military should expect to provide certain essentials for such programs on base:

   a) suitable and adequate facilities;

   b) space and facilities for a library or information resource center;

   c) adequate information resources to support the program;

   d) laboratory space and essential equipment for courses requiring laboratory experiments;

   e) other equipment and supplies essential to the courses offered.

It is the responsibility of the educational institution to notify the military base of additional or extraordinary needs, sufficiently in advance, to make it possible for the base to fulfill the request.

In most instances, the military is expected to provide certain initial funds for starting the service.

4) The military must give full support and backing to the program once it is initiated.

No program will succeed without the continuing support of the post commander, the commander’s staff, and the highest officials of the respective service branch. A postsecondary program will also need the attention of an educational officer who is a qualified educator, and is given time and staff to manage and evaluate the program and provide essential academic advisement. The educational officer will need the full support of all base officials. The success of such programs is highly dependent upon the experience, leadership, and resourcefulness of such an individual.
5) On bases where non-military personnel are permitted to take courses, it is understood that the first responsibility, in terms of space and instructional services, is to the military student. However, the inclusion of community people on a space-available and self-paid basis may be beneficial to all parties concerned and is encouraged.

c. The Evaluation of Educational Programs on Military Bases

1) Educational programs conducted by accredited or candidate postsecondary institutions on a military base should be evaluated by the appropriate regional accrediting commission in conjunction with an institutional evaluation.

Although informal evaluations may be made by military education staff, it is not appropriate for the military to engage in formally evaluating the programs of an accredited postsecondary institution. It is recommended, however, that appropriate military educational personnel confer with the institution in doing the relevant part of its self-study. An evaluation committee may wish to confer with the military regarding the support, resources, and effectiveness of a given program.

2) If an accredited institution offers educational programs on a military base within another accrediting region, the evaluation should be conducted jointly by the affected commissions, with primary responsibility vested in the parent commission. In the case of overseas programs conducted outside the United States or its possessions, the evaluation should be conducted by the appropriate regional commission.

3) Those responsible for postsecondary military base programs will be cognizant of, and generally expected to meet, the appropriate military, state, and regional accrediting commission guidelines for operation of the programs.

d. Consortia Agreements

Where two or more institutions are joined together in consortia to provide educational programs on military bases, certain common administrative arrangements and educational policies need to be agreed upon. This can be handled by a consortium board with appropriate representation from each of the participating institutions and the military. Such matters as calendar, admissions, course and degree requirements, transfer of credits, and tuition should be developed.

From the outset, the appropriate regional accrediting commission should be notified of, and involved in, the development of the consortia. Evaluation of the consortia educational program will be in conjunction with the evaluation and accreditation process with each participating institution. Consortia arrangements will not be evaluated for separate accredited status.

Adopted 1972
Policy A-11 Military-Sponsored Educational Programs

The several regional accrediting commissions will expect military-sponsored institutions seeking accreditation to meet basically the same criteria as do non-military institutions. In respect to the requirement of a public board, the commissions will take into account the peculiar responsibility of the government and the military for the ultimate control of the institution. However, it will expect the institution to have a public advisory board which exerts broad and significant influences upon the institution’s programs and operations. It will further expect, in keeping with the academic tradition, that the faculty will play a significant role in the determination of the educational policies of the institution.

When classified materials are used in the instructional program, these materials must be used in a manner consistent with the academic principles of the search for truth, and these materials and their instructional uses must be open to examination by evaluation committee members selected by the accrediting commission.

Adopted 1975

Policy A-12 Considerations When Closing a Postsecondary Educational Institution

Planning for a possible decision to close an educational institution requires thoughtful consideration and careful consultation with all affected constituencies. Every effort should be devoted to informing each constituency, as fully as possible, about the conditions requiring consideration of a decision of such importance, and all available information should be shared. Before closing, such alternatives as merging with another institution, forming a consortium, or participating in extensive inter-institutional sharing and cooperation should be carefully considered. As much as possible, the determination to close an institution should involve a consultative process, but responsibility for the final decision to close rests with the governing board.

Tradition and sentiment are important considerations, but sentimentality should not be allowed to determine events. A decision to close should never be made or reversed simply on the basis of fears, hopes, or aspirations that have little relation to reality. Neither should it be delayed to the point where the institution has lost its viability and its educational program no longer retains quality and integrity. Since the immediate interests of current students and faculty are most directly affected, their present and future prospects require especially sensitive attention and involvement.

It is assumed that closing an institution means a decision to discontinue its educational activities permanently, not merely to suspend them for an indefinite period in the hope that circumstances may someday permit their resumption. But it should be noted that most institutions of higher education are corporations established under the provisions of state law, and, as such, they may have legal responsibilities (holding title to real property, for example) that may necessitate the continued existence of the corporation after the educational activities of the institution have been terminated. Indeed, it is probable that such continued corporate existence, at least for a time, will prove to be the usual situation. In most cases, it is unlikely that corporate existence and educational activities can be terminated simultaneously.
Closing an Institution. A decision to close requires specific plans for providing in appropriate ways for the students, the faculty, the administrative and support staff, and for the disposition of the institution’s assets. Many considerations bear upon closing an educational institution, and each situation will be unique. The nature and sponsorship of public institutions, seminaries, and church-related colleges require different emphases and pose particular conditions to be met in reaching and carrying out the ultimate decision. Nevertheless, general guidelines may be helpful to each institution considering closing.

This statement makes only incidental reference to such corporate responsibilities and always in the educational context. It is imperative, therefore, that a board of trustees considering closing an institution under its care should be guided not only by guidelines such as these and by the state educational authorities, but also by advice of legal counsel. Special counsel to advise, with respect to problems of closing, may be desirable for the institution. Institutional and specialized accrediting bodies should also be consulted and be kept fully apprised of developments.

The Students. Students who have not completed their degrees should be provided for according to their academic needs. Arrangements for transfer to other institutions will require complete academic records and all other related information gathered in dossiers which can be transmitted promptly to receiving institutions. Agreements made with other institutions to receive transferring students and to accept their records should be in writing. Where financial aid is concerned, particularly federal or state grants, arrangements should be made with the appropriate agencies to transfer the grants to the receiving institutions. Where such arrangements cannot be completed, students should be fully informed. In cases where students have held institutional scholarships or grants and there are available funds which can legally be used to support students while completing degrees at other institutions, appropriate agreements should be negotiated.

Academic Records and Financial Aid Transcripts. All academic, financial aid information, and other records should be prepared for permanent filing, including microfilming. Arrangements for filing students’ records should be made with the state department of higher education or other appropriate agency. If there is no state educational agency which can receive records, arrangements should be made with another college or university or with the state archives to preserve the records. Notification should be sent to every current and past student indicating where the records are being stored and what the access to those records will be. Where possible, a copy of a student’s record should be forwarded to the individual student.

Completion of Institutional Obligations. When a student chooses to continue at another institution but is within a year or 18 months of completing an academic degree in the closing institution, arrangements may be made to permit that student to complete the requirements for a degree elsewhere, but to receive it from the closed institution. This may require special action by the appropriate state agency. Such arrangements should also include provision for continuation of the institution’s accreditation—for this purpose only by the accrediting agency involved. These steps normally require the institution to continue as a legal entity for 12 to 18 months beyond the closing date, but any such arrangement must be established in careful consultation with the appropriate authorities and with their written consent. If an institution enters into a teach-out agreement with another institution, it must submit the agreement to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities for approval. (See Policy A-13 Teach-Out Agreements.)
Provisions for Faculty and Staff. In every possible case, the institution should arrange for continuation of those faculty and staff who will be necessary for the completion of the institution’s work up to the closing date. When faculty and staff are no longer needed, the institution should make every effort to assist them in finding alternative employment. It should be understood that the institution can make no guarantees, but genuine good-faith efforts to assist in relocation and reassignment are essential. In the event that faculty or staff members find new positions, early resignations should be accepted.

The Final Determination. Determinations must be made to allocate whatever financial resources and assets remain after providing for the basic needs of current students, faculty, and staff. When the financial resources of the institution are inadequate to honor commitments, the Board should investigate what alternatives and protection are available under applicable bankruptcy laws before deciding to close. If funds are insufficient to maintain normal operations through the end of the closing process, the institution should not overlook the possibility of soliciting one-time gifts and donations to assist in fulfilling its final obligations.

Every effort should be made to develop publicly defensible policies for dividing the resources equitably among those with claims against the institution. One of the best ways of achieving this goal is to involve potential claimants in the process of developing the policies. Time and effort devoted to carrying the process to a judicious conclusion may considerably reduce the likelihood of lawsuits or other forms of confrontation.

It is impossible to anticipate in advance the many claims that might be made against remaining resources of an institution, but the following three principles may help to sort out possible claims and to set priorities:

1. Students have the right to expect basic minimal services during the final term, not only in the academic division but also in the business office, financial aid office, registrar’s office, counseling, and other essential support services. Staff should be retained long enough to provide these services. It may be appropriate to offer special incentives to keep key personnel present.

2. Reasonable notice is given to all employees, explaining the possibility of early termination of contracts and that the reasons for retaining some personnel longer than others are based on satisfying the minimal needs of students and the legal requirements for closing.

3. Every effort should be made to honor long-term financial obligations (e.g., loans, debenture), even though the parties holding such claims may choose not to press them.

The Closing Date. The board of trustees should take a formal vote to terminate the institution on a specified date. That date will depend on a number of factors, including the decision to file or not to file for bankruptcy. Another key factor is whether or not all obligations to students will have been satisfactorily discharged. This is particularly important if the decision is made to allow seniors in their final year to graduate from the institution by completing their degree requirements elsewhere. If such arrangements are made, the board must be sure to take the legal action necessary to permit awarding degrees after the institution otherwise ceases to function. Normally, formal vote to award a degree is made after all requirements have been met, but it is legally possible to make arrangements for a student to complete the requirements for a degree at another institution and to receive the degree from the closed institution. These requirements must be clearly specified along
with a deadline for completion. Also, the board must identify the person or persons authorized to
determine whether or not these requirements have, in fact, been satisfied. Arrangements must be
completed with the appropriate state and accrediting agencies in advance in order to ensure that
the degree is awarded by a legally authorized and accredited institution.

Disposition of Assets. In the case of a not-for-profit institution, the legal requirements of the state
and federal government must be carefully examined with respect to the disposition of institutional
assets. Arrangements for the sale of the physical plant, equipment, the library, special collections,
art, or other essential holdings, and for the disposition of any endowments or special funds, must
be explored with legal counsel. In the case of wills, endowments, or special grants, the institution
should discuss with the donors, grantors, executors of estates, and other providers of special funds,
arangements to accommodate their wishes. State laws regarding the disposition of funds from a
non-profit institution must be meticulously followed.

All concerned federal and state agencies need to be apprised of the institution’s situation, and any
obligations relating to state or federal funds need to be cleared with the proper agencies.

Other Considerations. The institution should establish a clear understanding with its creditors
and all other agencies involved with its activities to ensure that their claims and interests will be
properly processed. Insofar as possible, the institution should ensure that its final arrangements
will not be subject to later legal proceedings which might jeopardize the records or status of its
students or faculty.

Conclusion. The closing of an educational institution is never a happy event. Nevertheless, such
action can be rendered less traumatic through careful attention to the details of the legal and moral
obligations of the institution. Closing will be marked by sadness, but well-planned and conscientious
efforts to ensure that the institution’s students, faculty, and staff will be optimally provided for,
and that its assets will be used in ways that will honor the intentions of the original donors, should
help in avoiding bitterness and rancor. A final report on the closing should be submitted to the
appropriate accrediting and state agencies for their records.

Adopted 1982/Revised 1996

Policy A-13 Teach-Out Agreements

In accordance with federal regulation 34 CFR 602.24(c), if an institution enters into a teach-out
agreement with another institution, it must submit the agreement to the President of the Northwest
Commission on Colleges and Universities for approval prior to its implementation. For the purpose
of this regulation, a teach-out agreement is defined as a written agreement between institutions
that provides for the equitable treatment of students if one of those institutions stops offering an
educational program before all students enrolled in that program have completed the program.

For approval by the Commission, the agreement must be consistent with applicable accreditation
standards and Commission policies, and provide for the equitable treatment of students by ensuring
that:

1. The teach-out institution has the necessary experience, resources, and support services to provide
an educational program that is of acceptable quality and reasonably similar in content, structure,
and scheduling to that provided by the closed institution; and
2. The teach-out institution demonstrates that it can provide students access to the program and services without requiring them to move or travel substantial distances.

If an institution accredited or preaccredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities closes, the Commission works with the Department of Education and appropriate State agency(ies), to the extent feasible, to ensure that students enrolled in the affected institution are given reasonable opportunities to complete their education without additional charge.

In cases where an institution plans to close, representatives of the institution should refer to the general guidelines outlined in Policy A-12 Considerations When Closing a Postsecondary Educational Institution.

Adopted 1996/Revised 2002

Policy A-14 Complaints Regarding Member or Candidate Institutions

The Commission considers complaints regarding member or candidate institutions only when the reported conditions are substantially documented and are related to the eligibility requirements, standards, and policies of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The Commission assumes no responsibility for adjudicating isolated individual grievances; however, it may investigate individual complaints and reports to determine whether they reflect conditions within an institution that affect the quality of its programs or are detrimental to the general welfare. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall maintain an up-to-date record of all student complaints received by the Commission.

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities interprets its complaint procedures to defer to courts when litigation is instituted over the same issue brought to the Commission by a complainant. This shall be Commission procedure unless a preliminary review by Commission staff of the complaint and the institution’s response clearly indicates serious non-compliance with a Commission standard. In such instance, the Commission procedures for handling complaints against a member or candidate institution will be implemented.

Procedures for Handling Complaints

a. When an oral complaint regarding a member institution is received, the person is advised of the policy statement and requested to submit the complaint in writing with substantial documentation to the President of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

b. When a written complaint regarding a member institution is received, the President acknowledges receipt of the complaint in writing within 15 business days.

c. After acknowledging receipt of the complaint, the President and/or his or her designee analyzes it to determine if there is adequate documentation and if, where appropriate, institutional appeals procedures have been utilized. In case adequate documentation is not provided, the complainant is notified, in writing, within 10 business days that complaints can be considered only when reported conditions are substantially documented and are such as to jeopardize the quality of the educational program or the general welfare of the institution. In case institutional appeal procedures have not been utilized, the complainant is advised to do so first.
d. When the complaint is substantially documented, or a pattern or practice appears to be present when considering past complaints received against the institution, the chief executive officer of the institution is notified, in writing, by the President within 15 business days after acknowledging the complaint. The complaint is reported to the institution or a copy of the complaint is enclosed, and a written response is requested, normally within 20 business days.

e. The response from the chief executive officer of the institution is analyzed to determine institutional compliance with the Commission’s standards for accreditation.

f. If the President, on behalf of the Commission, judges the institution to be in compliance with the Commission’s standards for accreditation, the complainant and institution are so notified. If the President determines that the institution may be out of compliance with the Commission’s standards for accreditation, the matter is referred to the Commission for consideration and action at its next regularly scheduled meeting. Both the complainant and institution are notified of the referral.

g. In taking action on the complaint, the Commission may

   1) dismiss the complaint;

   2) meet in executive sessions with complainant and institutional representatives in an attempt to resolve the complaint;

   3) make recommendations to the institution suggesting areas for improvement including changes in procedures related to standards and policies of the Commission;

   4) determine that the institution is out of compliance with the Commission’s standards for accreditation and require corrective action by the institution within a specified period of time; or

   5) request a visit to the institution by an ad hoc committee of the Commission to review situations.

h. Complaints that are substantially documented and are judged by the Commission to be related to the eligibility requirements, standards, and policies of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities will be made available to the chair of the evaluation committee (evaluator, in the case of a single-person visit) for consideration as part of the next regularly scheduled institutional evaluation.

Policy A-15 Appeals Policy and Procedure

Appeals in General. An institution may appeal a negative action on its accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (Commission), unless the negative action is the subject of litigation initiated by the institution. In cases of litigation, the Commission shall defer to the judgment of a court of law. To appeal a negative action that is not the subject of litigation, an institution must:

a. give written notice to the President of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities of its intention to appeal the Commission’s decision, which must be received by the office of the President within thirty (30) days from the transmittal date of the notice of the negative action;

b. set forth specific grounds for the appeal, including a statement of the reasons for each ground, along with any other relevant statements or documents the institution desires to include; and

c. submit a deposit in the amount of $10,000 to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. (See Costs of Hearing.)

Upon receipt of items a. through c. above, the prior accreditation status of the institution, if any, shall be restored pending disposition of the appeal.

Actions Which May Be Appealed. The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall provide institutions the opportunity to appeal adverse actions, issuance or continuation of Show Cause orders, and/or imposition or continuation of Probation. The Appeal Board will provide the institution and the Commission in a timely manner with written notification of the result of the appeal as well as a detailed explanation for the result.

Grounds for Appeal. An appeal shall be based on one or more of the following grounds:

a. evaluator(s) and/or the Commission made substantial errors or omissions in carrying out prescribed procedures which affected the decision of the Commission;

b. evidence before the Commission at the time the accrediting decision was made was materially in error;

c. the decision of the Commission was not adequately supported by the facts before it at the time, or it was contrary to the substantial weight of evidence before the Commission.

Roles of the President and Commission Chair. Within ten (10) business days of the receipt of a properly filed appeal, the President shall notify the Chair of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities of the institution’s intention to appeal the Commission’s negative action. The President shall provide the Commission Chair with documentation from the institution regarding the appeal.

The Commission Chair shall nominate three (3) eligible individuals (see Eligibility for Membership on the Appeal Board) willing to serve as the Chair of the Appeal Board and provide the institution with the names, affiliations, and positions of the nominees. Within seven (7) business days of the transmittal date of the names of the nominees, the institution shall notify the Commission Chair.
of the individual from among the three nominees that it selects to be the Appeal Board Chair, and that individual shall serve as the Appeal Board Chair.

**Role of the Appeal Board Chair.** Within ten (10) business days of notification of acceptance by the institution and Commission Chair to serve, the Appeal Board Chair shall appoint the remaining six members of the seven-member Appeal Board to consider the institution’s appeal. The Appeal Board Chair shall provide the institution and the Commission Chair with a roster of no fewer than 15 nominees for membership on the Appeal Board. The roster shall include the names, affiliations, and positions of all nominees. Within seven (7) business days of the transmittal date of the list of Appeal Board nominees, the institution and Commission Chair shall each notify the Appeal Board Chair of acceptance of the list or its objection for cause (and the basis for the objection) of any nominee on the list. The Appeal Board Chair shall rule on an objection for cause. In addition to objections for cause, within the same seven (7) day time period, the institution and Commission Chair may each strike up to three nominees on a peremptory basis and return the list to the Appeal Board Chair. If either the institution or Commission Chair does not return the list within the time specified all persons named therein shall be deemed acceptable by that party. From among the list of acceptable nominees the Appeal Board Chair shall invite individuals to serve on the Appeal Board. If acceptable individuals are unable to act, or if for any other reason appointments cannot be made from the submitted list of nominees, the Appeal Board Chair shall have the authority to make appointments from among other eligible individuals (see **Eligibility for Membership on the Appeal Board**) without the submission of additional lists to the institution or the Commission Chair.

**Eligibility for Membership on the Appeal Board.** Members of the Appeal Board shall consist of representatives employed full-time by member institutions with the exception of one member who shall represent the public. At least one member of the Appeal Board shall represent an institution with similar characteristics to those of the institution filing the appeal. No member of an Appeal Board shall be a current member of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities nor shall have served on an evaluation committee to the institution filing the appeal.

**Appeal Board Duties.** The Chair of the Appeal Board shall set the date, time, and place of the hearing by the Appeal Board. The hearing shall be no later than one hundred twenty (120) days after receipt of written notice of the appeal and there shall be at least thirty (30) days’ written notice of the hearing given to the Commission and to the institution. If the institution or the Commission plans to call witnesses at the hearing, that party shall, at least five (5) calendar days before the hearing, provide the Appeal Board Chair and the other party with the names, affiliations, and positions of all witnesses. If the institution or the Commission intends to seek legal counsel and have that legal counsel present at the appeal hearing, that party shall, at least thirty (30) days in advance of the hearing, provide written notification, including the name of its legal counsel, to the other party and to the Chair of the Appeal Board.

In carrying out its duties the Appeal Board shall:

a. meet at the designated time and place to consider the appeal;

b. provide a hearing if the institution so requests;

c. consider the grounds for the appeal as alleged by the institution;

d. study the evidence submitted by the institution in support of its allegation;
e. consider relevant evaluation report(s), institutional response(s) to evaluation report(s), and other supporting statements and documents provided by the institution;

f. consider whether the Commission followed its stated policies and procedures;

g. make a final judgment on the institution’s appeal;

h. within twenty (20) business days after the end of the hearing, prepare a written report of the meeting, including a final judgment of the Appeal Board; and

i. forward the written report of the Appeal Board meeting, including the Board’s final judgment on the appeal, to the Chair of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the Commission’s President, and to the institution.

Conduct of the Hearing. The Chair of the Appeal Board may retain legal counsel as he/she deems appropriate and may decide any prehearing issues that may arise. Discovery such as depositions, interrogatories, and production of documents is not available to the parties except by mutual agreement.

a. The Chair of the Appeal Board shall control the hearing and the presentation of evidence. He/she shall ensure that all participants have a reasonable opportunity to be heard and to present relevant oral and written evidence. The Chair of the Appeal Board may limit the duration of a hearing dividing the available time equitably between the parties.

b. The technical rules of evidence shall not apply, but the Chair of the Appeal Board may limit the evidence to avoid undue repetition and to ensure relevance. He/she shall rule on all questions pertaining to the conduct of the hearing.

c. The institution’s presentation during the appeal hearing shall be strictly limited to those matters raised in the appeal documents; no additional written materials or evidence unavailable to the Commission at the time of its action may be presented.

d. Each party shall have the right to be represented by counsel or authorized spokesperson, to examine the witnesses of the other party, and to present oral and written evidence.

e. The hearing shall be closed and only necessary participants shall be present. A secretary shall record the minutes of the hearing. A court reporter may be present to prepare a record of the hearing at the election of either party and at the expense of the electing party.

Decision of the Appeal Board. The Appeal Board shall uphold the appeal of the institution only when it is shown with clear and convincing evidence that the institution sustained one of the grounds for appeal listed under Grounds for Appeal, items a through c. Upon finding that an institution has sustained the burden of proof, the Appeal Board shall notify the Chair of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, the President of the Commission, and the institution of its decision.

Costs of Hearing. At the time of submission of the notice of intent to appeal, the institution is required to deposit $10,000 with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities to cover necessary costs of the appeal. The costs shall include travel, meals and lodging, and other actual and necessary expenses of the Appeal Board.
Responsibility for costs associated with the hearing shall be determined by the decision of the Appeal Board:

a. If the decision of the Commission is sustained by the Appeal Board, the entire cost of the Appeal Board hearing shall be borne by the institution.

b. If the institution’s appeal is upheld by the Appeal Board, the entire cost of the Appeal Board shall be borne by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

In either case, each party shall bear the cost of its own expenses, including legal expenses, associated with the appeal.

Upon final disposition of the appeal, the parties shall be provided a detailed written statement of the costs of the Appeal Board. Any unused portion of the institution’s deposit shall be refunded and any amount due which is over and above the amount of the deposit shall be billed to the institution.


Policy A-16 Communication of Commission Action Regarding Recommendations

In order to clearly identify in the evaluation report which recommendations represent accreditation criteria that the institution may not meet and which are recommendations for improvement, the term “Recommendation” will be used only in those instances where the institution may not be in compliance with a Commission criterion for accreditation. Recommendations will be enumerated at the end of the evaluation report and will require action by the institution as determined by the Commission and indicated in its notification letter to the institution following the Commission’s review and action.

Adopted 1997/Revised 2002
Policy A-17 Public Disclosure of Information Regarding Type of Accreditation Granted, Criteria, Accreditation Procedures, Evaluation Schedule, and Commissioners and Commission Staff

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities makes publicly available through its Accreditation Handbook, Annual Directory, minutes of Commission meetings, newsletters, other publications or relevant correspondence the following information:

1) Each type of accreditation and preaccreditation granted by the Commission;

2) The procedures that institutions or programs must follow in applying for accreditation or preaccreditation;

3) The standards and procedures it uses to determine whether to grant, reaffirm, reinstate, restrict, deny, revoke, terminate, or take any other action related to each type of accreditation and preaccreditation granted by the Commission;

4) The institutions and degree levels currently accredited or preaccredited by the Commission and, for each institution and program, the year the Commission will next review or reconsider it for accreditation or preaccreditation; and

5) The names, academic and professional qualifications, and relevant employment and organizational affiliations of:
   (i) The members of the agency’s policy and decision-making bodies; and
   (ii) The agency’s principal administrative staff.

Items 1, 2, and 3 are available to the public through the Commission’s website and published in the Commission’s Accreditation Handbook which is available to the public upon request on a cost-recovery basis. Item 4 is published in the Annual Directory which is available to the public upon request. Item 5 is posted on the Commission’s website and is also available to the public upon request.

Adopted 1997/Revised 2002

Policy A-18 Commission Action Regarding Institutional Compliance Within Specified Period

If the Commission determines that an institution it accredits is not in compliance with a Commission standard for accreditation, the Commission will immediately initiate adverse action against the institution or require the institution to take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance within a time period that shall not exceed: 1) twelve months, if the longest program offered by the institution, is less than one year in length; 2) eighteen months, if the longest program offered by the institution, is at least one year, but less than two years, in length; or 3) two years, if the longest program offered by the institution, is at least two years in length.
The Commission may extend the period for compliance noted above should it reasonably expect that, based upon the institution’s progress toward meeting the Commission’s standard for accreditation, the institution will come into full compliance within a reasonable timeframe. Should an institution deem that as a result of mitigating circumstances it is not able to comply with the standard for accreditation within the specified period of time, the institution may submit a written request to the Commission for additional time to come into compliance with the standard for accreditation. The request is be submitted prior to the time limit for corrective action set forth by the Commission, provide a detailed explanation of the reasons why the institution cannot comply with the standard for accreditation within the designated time period, and demonstrate that the institution is making good progress in meeting the standard for accreditation. Following a review of the request, the Commission will make a determination as to whether the institution has based its request on valid reasons. If the Commission determines that the institution has substantiated good cause for not complying within the specified time period and is making good progress to come into compliance, the Commission will extend the period for achieving compliance and stipulate requirements for continuing oversight of the institution’s accreditation during the extension.

Adopted 1997/Revised 2002

**Policy A-19 Publication of Adverse Actions**

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities makes public through its President and publishes in the roster of member institutions and in the appropriate national directories the status of each institution. Those institutions on **Probation** or under **Show-Cause** will be so noted in these publications. In all cases of public negative sanction, the Commission will give the institution written reasons for its decision. A statement for response to inquiries regarding the action will be prepared in consultation with the institution. The Commission reserves the right to make the final determination of the nature and content of the public statement. The public statement issued by the Commission summarizing its decision to take an adverse action will be made available to the Secretary, the appropriate State postsecondary review entity, and the public upon request, no later than 60 days after the final decision has been made.

Adopted 1997/Revised 1997

**Policy A-20 Notification to Appropriate Accreditating Agencies and State Agencies Regarding Institutions’ Accreditation**

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall routinely share with other appropriate recognized accrediting agencies and State agencies information regarding the accreditation status of its institutions, including all adverse actions it has taken against an accredited institution.

Adopted 1997
Policy A-21 Institutional Response to an Onsite Evaluation Report

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities ensures that an institution that has undergone an on-site evaluation visit has two opportunities to respond in writing to the evaluation report. The first opportunity is to respond to a draft of the evaluation report to correct factual errors before the report is finalized and submitted to the Commission office. Prior to the onset of the evaluation visit, the chief executive officer of the institution is notified in writing of this opportunity.

Additionally, the institution may choose to provide a written response to the content and findings of the final evaluation report. The Commission considers the written response of the institution to the final evaluation report during its formal deliberations of the institution at its regularly scheduled summer or winter meeting. Prior to the Commission meeting the institution’s chief executive officer is notified in writing of this option.

Adopted 2002

Policy A-22 Review of Accreditation Criteria

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities conducts a systematic program of review of its accreditation criteria to ensure that they are relevant to the educational needs of students and adequate to evaluate the quality of the education provided by the institutions it accredits and preaccredits. In determining the specific procedures it follows in evaluating its accreditation criteria, the Commission ensures that its program of review includes these elements:

(1) The Commission conducts a regular review of its accreditation criteria every five years. The schedule for review is as follows:

Year One
    Standard Seven
    Standard Eight

Year Two
    Standard One
    Standard Six

Year Three
    Standard Two
    Standard Four

Year Four
    Standard Three
    Standard Five

Year Five
    Standard Nine
    Eligibility Requirements
    Standards as a Whole

This review cycle repeats every five (5) years thereafter.
(2) The Commission takes the following steps in conducting a regular review of its accreditation criteria:

(a) The Commission convenes one or more accreditation review committees for the accreditation criteria being reviewed. Each accreditation review committee is chaired by a Commissioner. Membership on an accreditation review committee consists of representatives of two-year and four-year member institutions from the public and private sectors who possess experience and expertise in the area of the accreditation criteria under review. At least one member of the accreditation review committee represents regionally accredited institutions from outside the Northwest region.

(b) Notification of the review process; a copy of the accreditation standard(s) under review; request for comment regarding the adequacy, effectiveness, and clarity of the standard(s); and request for suggestions for changes to the standard(s) under review are sent to: 1) the chief executive officer, accreditation liaison officer, head of the faculty organization, head of the student organization, and chair of the governing board of each accredited institution; 2) the chief executive officer, accreditation liaison officer, head of the faculty organization, head of the student organization, and chair of the governing board of each candidate institution; 3) head of the appropriate state higher education system authorities; and 4) head of appropriate state agencies that oversee higher education. Public notice of the review and request for comment will be posted to the Commission’s website.

(c) The accreditation review committee reviews the comments received from the constituencies identified in section (2)(b). The committee also reviews: 1) the academic literature to determine current educational trends; 2) standards for accreditation from other recognized accrediting agencies; 3) information related to the adequacy, effectiveness, and clarity of standards from biannual surveys of institutions that completed comprehensive evaluations; 4) information related to the adequacy, effectiveness, and clarity of standards from biannual surveys of first-time evaluators.

(d) The accreditation review committee prepares an analysis of findings and recommendation, with rationale, regarding suggested changes, if any, to the Commission’s accreditation criteria. The accreditation review committee’s findings and recommendation, with rationale, are forwarded to the Commission for consideration at its next regularly scheduled meeting.

(3) If the Commission determines that changes to its accreditation are not required, a notice is sent to the constituencies identified in section (2)(b) and a public notice of this determination is posted on the Commission’s website. If the Commission determines that a change to its standards for accreditation is needed, it acts within 12 months of the date of that determination to initiate action to revise the accreditation criteria and completes the revision to the accreditation criteria within 24 months from the date the determination was made. The Commission takes the following steps in revising its accreditation criteria:

(a) The Commission charges the accreditation review committee identified in section (2)(a) above with drafting a proposed revision to the accreditation criteria;

(b) Based upon the charge from the Commission and input received from constituencies identified in section (2)(b), the accreditation review committee prepares a draft of proposed changes and recommendation for consideration by the Commission.
Following a review of the draft of the proposed revision to the accreditation criteria and recommendation from the accreditation review committee, the Commission may reject the proposed changes and return the matter to the accreditation review committee for further work. If the Commission accepts the proposed changes, including modifications made by the Commission, it forwards the proposed changes for comment. A notice of proposed change(s) and request for comment is distributed to: 1) the chief executive officer, accreditation liaison officer, head of the faculty organization, head of the student organization, and chair of the governing board of each accredited institution; 2) the chief executive officer, accreditation liaison officer, head of the faculty organization, head of the student organization, and chair of the governing board of each candidate institution; 3) head of the appropriate state higher education system authorities; and 4) head of the appropriate state agencies that oversee higher education. Public notice of the proposed change(s) and request for comment is posted to the Commission’s website.

The Commission allows a minimum of 30 days for receipt of comments from its constituencies regarding proposed changes to the accreditation criteria.

The Commission reviews comments received from its constituencies at its next regularly scheduled meeting. The Commission may defer further consideration of the proposed change(s) pending further review by the accreditation review committee. It may also modify the proposed change(s), as appropriate, based on comments from its constituencies and distribute the proposed changes to the membership for a vote of approval.

Member institutions have thirty (30) days to complete and return the ballot. The votes are tabulated and the Commission announces the results of the vote at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting. If approved by the membership, a copy of the revised accreditation criteria is distributed to the constituencies identified in section (2)(b) and posted on the Commission’s website.

Adopted 2002/Revised 2002

Policy A-23 Responsibilities for Title IV Oversight

Based upon the most recent student loan default rate data provided by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the results of financial or compliance audits, program reviews, and any other information that the Secretary may provide, the Commission will maintain a record of compliance with institutional responsibilities under Title IV of the Higher Education Act for institutions accredited or preaccredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Adopted 2002

Policy A-24 Information Provided to the U.S. Department of Education

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities will provide the U.S. Department of Education with a copy of its annual report. Following each of its biannual meetings, the Commission will provide the U.S. Department of Education with an updated directory of accredited and preaccredited institutions and a summary of the Commission’s major accrediting activities during the previous six months.

Adopted 2002
Policy A-25 Complaints Against NWCCU

Persons who are aggrieved as a direct result of acts or omissions by the Commission related to its accreditation functions may file a complaint with the Commission. Complaints must be submitted in writing with an original signature to the Chair of the Commission at the NWCCU office address. The complaint must describe circumstances showing that the complainant has been aggrieved as a result of the Commission’s acts or omissions related to its accreditation functions. Concern that a Commission action was not in accord with the complainant’s expectations is not in and of itself cause for review of the complaint.

Procedures for Handling Complaints

a. Within 15 business days after receipt by the Commission, the Chair will acknowledge its receipt and may request further information regarding the particulars of the complaint. If further information is requested, the Chair may defer further action until an adequate response is received.

b. If the Chair is a direct subject of the complaint, all actions under this policy to be taken by the Chair may be delegated to an individual who is not a direct subject of the complaint.

c. If the complaint, or other information received, adequately demonstrates that the complainant is aggrieved as a result of the Commission’s acts or omissions related to its accreditation functions, the Chair or designee shall appoint a Review Committee of three (3) College and University Presidents from regionally accredited institutions in the Northwest region to review the complaint and to recommend a course of action to the Chair of the Commission. The Review Committee may not include any sitting NWCCU Commissioners or any other persons who, either individually or in their institutional capacity, are direct subjects of the complaint or who may be otherwise involved in a way that, in the discretion of the Chair, would constitute a disqualifying conflict of interest.

d. The Committee shall review the complaint and any additional information furnished by the complainant. It may also gather other information regarding the circumstances related to the complaint as, in its discretion, the Committee sees fit. Presumptively, the Committee should complete its review within 45 days after its formation, provided that if more than 45 days is needed, the Committee may request that the Chair or designee grant additional time.

e. Within 15 business days after receipt of the Committee’s recommendation, the Chair or designee will review the Committee’s recommendation and shall thereafter consult with the President of the Commission with respect to the appropriate disposition of the complaint. If the President is the subject of the complaint, the Chair may consult with the Commissioners. Within 10 business days after these consultations, the Chair shall notify the complainant in writing of the Commission’s conclusions and actions, if any, with respect to the complaint.

Adopted 2007
SECTION B

General Policies Relating to Institutional Accreditation

Policy B-1 Role and Value of Accreditation

Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution or a program that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality. In the United States, accreditation is voluntarily sought by institutions and programs and is conferred by non-governmental bodies.

Accreditation has two fundamental purposes: to certify the quality of the institution or program and to assist in the improvement of the institution or program.

The bodies conducting institutional accreditation are national or regional in scope and comprise the institutions that have achieved and continue to maintain accreditation. A specialized (or program) body conducting accreditation of a program preparing students for a profession or occupation is often closely associated with professional associations in the field.

Both institutional and specialized bodies conduct the accreditation process by using a common pattern. The pattern requires integral self-study of the institution or program, followed by an on-site visit by an evaluation committee and a subsequent review and decision by a central governing group. Within this general pattern, the various accrediting bodies have developed a variety of individual procedures adapted to their own circumstances.

Members of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) have been found by CHEA to meet specific criteria of procedure and organization regarded as necessary for the effective conduct of the accrediting process. A CHEA-recognized accrediting body can be regarded as qualified to conduct evaluations of institutions and/or programs seeking accreditation, and accreditation by such bodies is generally recognized and accepted in higher education.

Institutional or specialized accreditation cannot guarantee the quality of individual graduates or of individual courses within an institution or program, but can give reasonable assurance of the context and quality of the education offered. Both institutional and specialized accreditation speak to the conditions of the institution or program and not to specific details of educational outcome.

Institutional Accreditation. An institutional accrediting body considers the characteristics of whole institutions. For this reason, an institutional accrediting body gives attention not only to the educational programs of the institutions it accredits, but also to other such institutional characteristics as the student personnel services, financial conditions, and administrative strength.

The criteria of an institutional accrediting body are broad, as is demanded by the attention to an entire institution and by the presence in the United States of postsecondary institutions of widely different purposes and scopes. Such breadth of criteria also provide encouragement to institutions to try innovative curricula and procedures and to adopt them when they prove successful.
Accreditation of an institution by an institutional accrediting body certifies to the general public that the institution:
   a. has appropriate purposes;
   b. has the resources needed to accomplish its purposes;
   c. can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purposes; and
   d. gives reason to believe that it will continue to accomplish its purposes.

Institutional improvement is encouraged by an institutional accrediting body through the requirement that the accredited institution conduct periodic self-evaluations seeking to identify what the institution does well, determining the areas in which improvement is needed, and developing plans to address needed improvements. While the certification of accreditation indicates an acceptable level of institutional quality, any institution, however excellent, is capable of improvement, which must come from its own clear identification and understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.

Institutional improvement is also encouraged by the institutional accrediting body through the advice and counsel provided by the visiting evaluation committee, which comprises experienced educators drawn from accredited institutions, and by the publications of the accrediting body.

Specialized Accreditation. A specialized accrediting body focuses its attention on a particular program within an institution of higher education. The close relationship of the specialized accrediting body with the professional association for the field helps ensure that the requirements for accreditation are related to the current requirements for professional practice.

In a number of fields (e.g., medicine, law, dentistry), graduation from an accredited program in the field is a requirement for receiving a license to practice in the field. Thus, specialized accreditation is recognized as providing a basic assurance of the scope and quality of professional or occupational preparation. This focus of specialized accreditation leads to accreditation requirements that are sharply directed to the nature of the program, including specific requirements for resources needed to provide a program satisfactory for professional preparation. Because of this limitation of focus to a single program, many specialized accrediting bodies require that the institution offering the program be institutionally accredited before consideration can be given to program accreditation.

Improvement of a program is encouraged through specialized accreditation by the use of the specific accreditation requirements as objective characteristics that must be attained for a program; thus, for a non-accredited program, the accreditation requirements serve as specific goals to be achieved. In addition to accrediting standards, assistance for program improvement is provided through the counsel of the visiting accreditation evaluation committee, which includes practitioners of the profession and experienced and successful faculty members and administrators in other institutions.

Institutional and Specialized Accreditation. Institutional and specialized accreditation are complementary. The focus of an institutional accrediting body on an institution, as a total operating unit, provides assurance that the general characteristics of the institution have been examined and found to be satisfactory. The focus of a specialized accrediting body on a specific program provides assurance that the details of that particular program meet the external accreditation standards. Institutional accreditation, concerned with evaluating the institution as a whole, does not seek to deal with any particular program in great detail, although programs are reviewed as a part of the consideration of the entire institution. Specialized accreditation, speaking to a specific program,
does not seek to deal significantly with the general conditions of the institution, although certain
general conditions are considered in the context in which accredited programs are offered.

In fulfilling its two purposes, public certification and institutional and program improvement,
accreditation provides service of value to several constituencies:

To the public, the values of accreditation include:

a. an assurance of external evaluation of the institution or program and a finding that there is
conformity to general expectations in higher education or the professional field;

b. an identification of institutions which have voluntarily undertaken explicit activities directed
at improving the quality of the institution and its professional programs, and are carrying them
out successfully;

c. an improvement in the professional services available to the public as accredited programs
modify their requirements to reflect changes in knowledge and practice generally accepted in
the field; and

d. a decreased need for intervention by public agencies in the operations of educational institutions,
since the institutions, through accreditation, are providing privately for the maintenance and
enhancement of educational quality.

To students, accreditation provides:

a. an assurance that the educational activities of an accredited institution or program have been
found to be satisfactory and, therefore, meet the needs of the students;

b. assistance in the transfer of credits between institutions or in the admission of students to
advanced degree programs through the general acceptance of credits among accredited
institutions when the performance of the student has been satisfactory and the credits to be
transferred are appropriate to the receiving institution;

c. a prerequisite in many cases for undertaking licensure for a profession.

Institutions of higher education benefit from accreditation through:

a. the (external) stimulus for self-evaluation and self-directed institutional improvement;

b. the strengthening of institutional and program self-evaluation by the (external) review and
counsel provided through the accrediting body;

c. the application of criteria of accrediting bodies, generally accepted throughout higher education,
which help guard against external encroachments harmful to institutional or program quality
by providing benchmarks independent of forces that impinge on individual institutions;

d. the enhancing of the reputation of an accredited institution because of public regard for
accreditation;
Accreditation serves the professions by:

a. providing a means for the participation of practitioners in setting the requirements for preparation to enter the professions;

b. contributing to the unity of the professions by bringing together practitioners, teachers, and students in an activity directed at improving professional preparation and professional practices.

Policy B-2 Periodic Review of Member Institutions

Accrediting procedures of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities necessarily include periodic review of accredited institutions, both for their benefit and to ensure fulfillment of the accrediting Commission’s accountability function. Such review should be geared primarily to institutional circumstances and the sophistication of continuing self-study on a given campus. The normal intervals for review should be five years following initial accreditation and ten years thereafter. Every accredited and candidate institution is required to submit an annual report. In the fifth year of the ten year cycle, institutions are required to submit an interim report reflecting their responses to the recommendations of the previous evaluation committee, the rationale for their responses, a description of the major changes effected since the last evaluation, and a summary of significant changes contemplated for the future. When an institution undergoes substantive change as defined by Policy A-2 Substantive Change, or if its educational effectiveness is questioned at any time, the Commission will be expected to take appropriate action. The Commission reserves the right to review an institution at any time that circumstances require.

Financial Audits. In instances when the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education has notified the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities of an institution’s noncompliance with regard to its responsibilities under Title IV of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act, including any results of financial or compliance audits, program reviews, and any other information, the Commission, in addition to its already existing policies and procedures, shall take the following actions: (1) the Commission shall notify the institution requesting that it develop a special interim report responding to the issues identified by the Secretary to be submitted to the Commission office within 45 days; (2) Commission staff will determine whether the institution’s quality of education or ability to meet the Commission’s standards is affected by the institution’s failure to comply with the Title IV program responsibilities under Title IV of the Act; (3) after thorough review of the institution’s report, if the Commission staff determines that the institution’s quality of education is affected or the institution is not in compliance with its accreditation standards, a focused evaluation committee will conduct an on-site evaluation to the institution to evaluate in what ways educational quality is being affected and the scope of noncompliance with the Commission’s accreditation standards and policies; (4) following the on-site evaluation visit, a report will be written by the committee chair and submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities for its review and action at its next scheduled meeting; (5) the institution will be notified of the Commission’s action(s) with
respect to the institution’s report and evaluation visit in a timely manner; and (6) the Commission will notify the Secretary within 45 days of its findings and subsequent action(s) with regard to the institution’s compliance with its accreditation standards and policies and how educational quality is being affected at the institution.

It is the intent of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities to extend and intensify the value of self-study as an instrument for promoting institutional improvement and educational effectiveness. Ideally, institutional self-study should be an integral and ongoing activity on every campus, only indirectly related to calendars and accreditation but strongly emphasizing the natural relationship between self-study and educational planning.

The more self-study and evaluation are seen as directly related to institutional viability and quality, the more productive the self-study and evaluation process will be. At its best, the periodic review of accredited institutions provides a creative means of assisting institutions in assessing their educational mission and goals and their success in fulfilling them.

In order to facilitate these principles, the regional accrediting commissions will consult with accredited institutions with respect to the kind of institutional reports which may be submitted in connection with the evaluation process, as well as to determine the nature and timing of evaluation visits.

Adopted 1973/Revised 1997

**Policy B-3 Code of Good Practice in Accrediting in Higher Education**

It is the policy of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities to follow the guidelines of the Code of Good Practice. Under the Code, the Commission agrees:

a. to evaluate or visit an institution or program of study only on the express invitation of the chief executive officer or, when the action is initiated by the organization with respect to an institution already accredited by the organization, with the specific authorization of the chief executive officer of the institution or the CEO’s officially designated representative;

b. to permit the withdrawal of a request for initial accreditation at any time (even after evaluation) prior to final action;

c. to recognize the right of an institution or program to be appraised in the light of its own stated purposes, so long as those purposes demonstrably fall within the definitions of general purpose as established by the Commission

d. to rely upon regional accreditation for evaluations of general quality of an institution;

e. to state criteria for accreditation in terms that are manifestly relevant to the quality of an institution or program, respecting institutional freedom in other matters;

f. to use relevant qualitative and quantitative information in its evaluation process;

h. to consider a program or programs of study at an institution, including its administration and financing, not on the basis of a single predetermined pattern, but rather in relationship to the operation and goals of the entire institution;
h. to assist and stimulate improvement of the educational effectiveness of an institution and, to this end, to be prepared to provide consultative assistance;

i. to encourage sound, educational experimentation and to permit innovations;

j. to design questionnaires and forms so as not only to obtain information for the visiting examiners, but also to stimulate an institution to evaluate itself;

k. to conduct any evaluation visit to an institution, by experienced and qualified examiners, under conditions that ensure impartial and objective judgment;

l. to follow the principle that there shall be adequate representation in an evaluation from the staffs of other institutions offering programs of study in the fields to be accredited;

m. to avoid appointment of visitors who may not be acceptable to an institution;

n. to cooperate with other accrediting agencies in scheduling joint visits when an institution so requests;

o. to provide for adequate consultation during the visit between the evaluation committee and the faculty and staff of an institution, including the president or the president’s designated representative;

p. to provide the president of an institution being evaluated an opportunity to read the factual part of the report prepared by the visiting evaluation committee and to comment on the accuracy before the agency takes action on it;

q. to provide adequate opportunity for inclusion of students in the interviewing process during accrediting visits;

r. to regard the text of the evaluation report as confidential between an institution and the accrediting agency, with the exception that it may be made available to other recognized accrediting agencies by which the institution has been accredited or whose accreditation it is seeking;

s. except as provided in (r), to permit an institution to make such disposition of evaluation reports as it desires;

t. to consider decisions relative to accreditation only after receipt of the comments of the president as provided in (p), and when the chair of the evaluation committee is present or the views of the evaluation committee are otherwise adequately represented;

u. to refrain from conditioning accreditation upon payment of fees for purposes other than membership dues or actual evaluation costs;

v. to notify an institution as quickly as possible regarding any accreditation decision;

w. to revoke accreditation only after advance notice has been given to the president of an institution that such action is contemplated, and the reasons therefore, sufficient to permit timely rejoinder; and
x. to provide the means for an institution to appeal or request a reconsideration of a decision regarding accredited status.

Adopted 1972

**Policy B-4 Relationship Between General and Specialized Accrediting Agencies**

It is the policy of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, in cooperation with other recognized accrediting bodies, to be guided by the following principles regarding the relationship between general and specialized accrediting agencies.

**Basic Principles.** The following principles are assumed as axiomatic:

a. Each institution of higher education must be free to decide for itself whether or not to seek accreditation by any particular agency.

b. A general (regional) accrediting agency, in granting accreditation, accredits an institution as a whole and, therefore, cannot omit from its evaluation any area of the program of the institution. However, the general accreditation of the institution as a whole is not, and should not be, interpreted as being equivalent to specialized accreditation of each of the several parts or programs of the institution.

c. The general accrediting agencies draw upon the experience of specialized accrediting agencies in establishing standards of excellence in the specialized fields and for assistance in evaluating them, and, in turn, aid those agencies in the appraisal of supporting and related areas and of institutional control and management. Appropriate assistance on the part of specialized agencies might include suggesting evaluators for the general agency to serve it and to report to it alone; providing a panel of nominees from which the general agency might choose its evaluators; providing information concerning its standards and criteria; and the like; and, on the part of the general agency, providing information concerning the organization, overall governance, and administration of the institution, the quality of supporting programs, and the like.

d. A general and a specialized accrediting agency collaborate in evaluating a specialized program whenever the program or the institution is accredited by both, or desires accreditation by both, or invites both to participate in the evaluation.

In the contrary case, the general accrediting agency may, nevertheless, receive unofficially appropriate assistance (see c. above) from the specialized agency, but the latter is not officially involved.

**Institutional Freedom.** An institution is free to determine the accrediting agencies with which it will deal, whether general or specialized. The existence of a specialized accrediting agency recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) implies that a determination has been made on behalf of the institutions of higher education that a social need exists for accreditation in that particular field.

Nevertheless, an institution may choose not to avail itself of such accreditation. It may disagree
with the conclusion of CHEA, may have reservations concerning the standards or the nature of the evaluation of the accrediting agency, or may not accept the appropriateness of the agency’s standards, point of view, or emphasis for it, or may feel that the cost is disproportionate to the value of accreditation, or may just want to be independent.

What the institution must not do, however, is to interpret its general accreditation as validating a specialized program in the same manner and to the same extent as specialized accreditation.

If in such a case the specialized agency wishes to attempt to convince the institution that it should seek specialized accreditation, it is, of course, free to do so, but the general agency should take no position whatsoever on this point.

Adopted 1972

**Policy B-5 Interagency Cooperation in Accreditation**

**Basic principles.** Cooperation among accrediting agencies may occur in many areas and may take a variety of forms. The programmatic specialized accrediting agencies provide the institutional accrediting agencies with standards of excellence in the specialized fields and assistance in evaluating them. The institutional accrediting agencies, in turn, provide the specialized accrediting agencies with assistance in the appraisal of supporting and related areas of institutional control and management. Institutional accrediting agencies, specialized accrediting agencies, and institutions should work closely together in the total accrediting process.

It is the intent of the policy to identify a range of opportunities for cooperative endeavors, rather than to propose a single structure for cooperation. Cooperation not only is a desirable goal, but sincere, continuing efforts toward its achievement are essential if accreditation is to remain a positive force in advancing quality education. Toward this end, the following principles are set forth:

a. Facilitating cooperation between and among institutional and specialized accrediting agencies should be an objective of CHEA, the accrediting agencies, and the institutions served by them.

b. Consistent with the concept of voluntary accreditation, each institution of higher education should decide for itself whether to seek accreditation by an appropriate agency or combination of agencies.

c. Institutions desiring coordinated accrediting activities, particularly among agencies accrediting programs located within the same academic administrative unit (e.g., a School of Professional Studies), should be offered every possible assistance and cooperation.

d. Coordination begins with the designation of responsibility within the institution for liaison with the various accrediting agencies.

e. To be successful, coordination requires advance planning by both the institution and the accrediting agency or agencies involved.

f. Representatives of each accrediting agency will be responsible to their parent agency for investigating and reporting activities carried out as part of the accrediting cycle.

Definitions and cooperative arrangements:
a. An institutional (general) agency accredits an institution as a whole and therefore includes all areas, activities, and programs of the institution. Normally, institutional accreditation testifies to: (1) the appropriateness of the mission and goals of the institution; (2) the adequacy of its organization, program, and resources, both material and human, when viewed against its objectives and generally accepted accrediting standards; and (3) evidence of the accomplishment of institutional objectives in reasonable measure.

b. Specialized accrediting agencies accredit program(s). The focus of specialized accreditation is on the effectiveness with which the program meets its objectives and those of the institution, and the accrediting standards for quality education. Normally, specialized accreditation reviews the relationship of the program to the larger unit, the adequacy of the organization and resources for program maintenance and development, and evidence of accomplishment of programmatic objectives. However, specialized accreditation does not purport to make judgments on the institution as a whole (except in the case of single-purpose institutions).

The following cooperative relationships have been developed:

a. Institutional and institutional accreditation agencies, including:
   1) Regional and regional;
   2) Regional and national;
   3) National and national; and
   4) Regional or national and specialized (functioning as an institutional).

b. Institutional and specialized.

c. Specialized and specialized.

Each accrediting agency should function in accordance with its own purpose and recognized scope of activity. The unique contribution of both institutional and specialized accrediting to the total evaluative process, and the benefits accruing to the institution, the program, and the agencies from the coordinated effort, have been recognized.

Guidelines for Cooperation:

a. Institutional role. The institution should assume a leadership role in suggesting how cooperating accrediting agencies can best work together to provide optimum service to the institution.

b. Need for written agreements. Written agreements should be established among accrediting agencies that propose to cooperate. In initial form, these may be relatively simple and deal primarily with matters of principle, becoming more specific as the cooperating agencies resolve procedural differences through experience. Sharing of the written agreement with all participants in the accrediting process will reduce potential misunderstandings and conflicts.

c. Designation of accrediting responsibility.
1) Between two or more institutional accrediting agencies:

   a) An institution with operations that cross regional boundaries must be prepared to deal with all of the regional accrediting agencies involved; however, the regional accrediting agency for the parent campus normally will serve as the coordinating agency.

   b) A specialized institution for which there is a national specialized institutional accrediting agency (e.g., American Association of Bible Colleges, Association of Independent Colleges and Schools, Distance Education and Training Council) is encouraged to deal with the appropriate specialized agency. If the institution desires to seek only regional accreditation, the institution should so inform the specialized agency.

   c) A specialized institution seeking accreditation from two or more national, specialized accrediting agencies must determine what constitutes its predominant emphasis (specialization), and that determination will identify the appropriate coordinating agency.

   d) A specialized institution for which there is a specialized accrediting agency that accredits free-standing specialized institutions (e.g., American Bar Association, Association of Theological Schools, National Association of Schools of Music) is encouraged to deal with the appropriate specialized agency. If the institution desires to seek accreditation from an institutional accrediting agency as well, the specialized agency would serve as the coordinating agency. If the institution desires to seek only institutional accreditation, the institution should so inform the programmatic agency.

2) Between institutional and specialized accrediting agencies:

   a) When a multipurpose institution seeks a coordinated accreditation involving both an institutional accrediting agency and one or more specialized accrediting agencies, the institutional accrediting agency will serve as the coordinating agency.

   b) When external coordination is not possible, an institution should seek accreditation for an academic administrative unit or subunit within the institution after it has achieved appropriate accreditation of the more inclusive entity (total institution, college/school, division, department, program - in that order).

3) Between specialized accrediting agencies:

   When an institution seeks accreditation involving two or more specialized accrediting agencies (located within the same or in different academic administrative units), the chief executive officer of the institution, with mutual agreement and consent of the involved accrediting agencies, shall designate the coordinating agency, with responsibility normally going to the agency representing the program with the largest enrollment. This agency will coordinate the accrediting activities (joint and/or autonomous) consistent with the established guidelines.

   d. Accreditation standards. The accreditation standards of the participating accrediting agencies (institutional and specialized) shall apply during the review. Committee members should be aware of the range of standards being utilized. Procedures followed during the visit and the subsequent reporting phase must reflect the standards as required by each agency. In instances
in which standards may overlap or vary, the visit and report must incorporate data relevant to the specific agencies.

e. Contacts with institution. Accrediting agencies which utilize staff primarily should arrange a joint institutional visit to negotiate details of the cooperative accrediting process. When all parties are not involved in a pre-visit, participating agencies will contact the institution individually regarding the self-study, the visit, and other expectations. However, these contacts must be carefully coordinated to eliminate conflicting instructions regarding the joint accrediting process. Participating institutions should be flexible in establishing visitation dates.

f. Self-study alternatives. When an institution, or an administrative unit within an institution, is seeking accreditation from more than one agency, the self-study may take a variety of forms, including the following: (1) common self-study, (2) core self-study, with varying supplemental analysis, (3) separate studies, with certain common elements, and (4) a nontraditional alternative.

Institutions may wish to prepare a single self-study report designed to meet all requirements of each agency. The nature and format of the self-study document should be negotiated at the time a joint accrediting cycle is initiated. When the committee will function as a unit (such as an institutional agency and a specialized agency visiting a single-purpose institution), a common self-study is indicated. In multi-purpose institutions, joint visits may be concurrent rather than coordinated. In the consultative stages establishing the accrediting process, a procedure for responding adequately to the data needs of all the accrediting agencies should be negotiated.

g. Visiting evaluation committee and on-site visit. Written agreements should include: the composition of the committee; the complementary skills required and the responsibility for the selection of the members of the committee; designation of the chair (who will normally be from the coordinating agency); procedures to be followed during the visit; the format of the written report; the process for the development of the committee’s report; the nature of recommendations; and the committee’s reporting to the institution.

Cooperating agencies are encouraged to share data about potential site visitors, forming common pools of names when possible or exchanging information in specific situations. All site visitors may be selected from the common pool by the coordinating agency, or the cooperating agencies may determine criteria (size of evaluation committee, areas of competency desired, background experience related to institution to be visited, etc.) and specify the number of committee members to be selected by each cooperating agency. When there are more than two cooperating agencies, the chair should be designated by the coordinating agency. When there are only two cooperating agencies, co-chairs may be designated by each agency. The chair (co-chairs) is responsible for making logistical arrangements.

A specialized accrediting agency can add a valuable dimension by working cooperatively with an appropriate institutional accrediting agency in the selection of a generalist to serve on the evaluation committee. When an institutional accrediting agency needs certain expertise on an evaluation committee, the appropriate specialized accrediting agency can provide assistance. In developing cooperative committee arrangements, however, the integrity of the review process must be preserved. Generalists cannot effectively replace specialists, or vice versa, and a large committee representing several accrediting agencies may not be as effective as coordinated multiple committees.

h. Commission action. Accrediting decisions on reports are made in accordance with the policies
established by the participating agencies. When a common committee report is filed, each accrediting commission should receive a copy. When no common report is feasible, each accrediting commission takes action on the report prepared by its committee representatives. Each commission should take such action as its standards require and as supported by the report data. Accrediting actions by any commission (institutional or programmatic) should be shared with participating accrediting agencies.

i. Fees and costs. Because the costs of an accrediting cycle should be reduced through virtue of cooperation among accrediting agencies, fees and costs should be determined between and among accrediting agencies prior to the accrediting process. The institution is responsible for paying the usual or reduced fees to each agency to cover any cost of general agency services related to the accreditation cycle. Direct costs of a site visit can be reduced through such cooperative arrangements as a joint committee, and therefore the fee to the institution can be proportionately reduced. In instances when a cooperating agency does not assess a fee to the institution, its proportionate costs will have to be determined and that agency will honor its share. Each agency should handle its own billing.

It should be noted that one of the most significant reductions in the cost burden to the institution can result from a combined self-study.

Adopted 1982

Policy B-6 Evaluation of Institutions Operating Interregionally

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities has adopted the following policy and procedures for the evaluation of institutions operating interregionally.

Procedures:

a. The responsibility for the accreditation of an institution operating at locations lying within the geographical boundaries of more than one regional commission lies with the regional commission having jurisdiction over the home location of the institution (“home regional”) except:

If the home regional determines that an activity located within another regional commission’s jurisdiction is separately accreditable, that separately accreditable activity is the responsibility of the regional commission serving that location.

b. Whenever the home regional makes an on-site evaluation visit to an institution’s activity within another region, the regional commission serving that region (“visited regional”) will be asked to suggest one or more evaluators from the visited region to serve on the evaluation committee of the home regional.

c. Evaluators suggested by the visited regional will be placed on the visiting evaluation committee either as full members of the committee or as persons to be used for special assignments during the visit, at the option of the home regional. These evaluators will act as evaluators for the home regional, and the visited regional will have no responsibility for them. In composing the visiting committee, the home regional will follow its usual procedures. The presence on the visiting committee of evaluators suggested by the visited regional is intended to provide the home regional with a base of information appropriate to the geographically extended nature of the
institution under evaluation, and does not imply approval by the visited regional of the institution under evaluation, nor approval by the visited regional of the home region’s actions.

d. In any case, the evaluators suggested by the visited regional will visit activities within the area of the visited regional, possibly in addition to other responsibilities as evaluation committee members.

e. The home regional will provide to the visited regional a full copy of the visiting evaluation committee report, which the visited regional will hold in agreement with the policies and practices of the home regional regarding confidentiality of visiting evaluation committee reports. In addition, the home regional will inform the visited regional of all accrediting actions affecting the institution under evaluation.

Adopted 1982

Policy B-7 Evaluation and Accreditation of Multi-Unit Institutions

One of the essential functions of regional accreditation is to provide informed and trustworthy assurance that individual institutions are capable of accomplishing their mission goals. Accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities applies to entire institutions or to separately accredited units, rather than to specific programs within institutions, including all their aspects and programs as they exist at the time when the accreditation is granted or reaffirmed. The coverage is designated in the Directory of Accredited and Preaccredited Institutions published annually by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

In order to assure more effective, orderly, and efficient evaluation of complex institutions—those which have two or more separate units organized around a central administrative or system office or an institution with geographically dispersed locations—it is necessary to follow procedures that conform to the nature and operation of these institutions. This policy applies to the evaluation of all multi-unit institutions, regardless of whether the units are separately accredited, and they apply to locations within the NWCCU region, other accrediting regions of the United States, and international sites that meet the definition for operationally separate units and where academic credit is granted.

Operationally Separate Units. It is an institution’s prerogative and responsibility to define its mission and organizational structures. When an institution has operationally separate units, it may seek accreditation as a single entity or the separate accreditation of its units. When circumstances warrant, institutions also may petition the Commission to alter their current status: from separately accredited units to single institutional accreditation, or the reverse. Such a petition would be categorized as a major substantive change.

The governing board of the institution must authorize and request any such change.

An operationally separate unit is considered to be a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of what is defined as the primary campus and/or central administration and (1) is permanent in nature; (2) offers at least 50% of the courses of an educational program leading to a degree, certificate, or other educational credential; (3) has its own faculty and administrative organization; and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

When operationally separate units are centrally governed, administered, or served, the primary
institutional central office will be reviewed, at the time the units are evaluated, to appraise its effectiveness in their support.

New operationally separate units of member institutions prepare for accreditation under the Commission’s rules governing initial accreditation. An evaluation will be made after the new entity has operated its principal educational programs for six months to one year and has students actively pursuing these programs at the time of the Commission evaluation, unless earlier action is authorized by the Commission. Newly-founded units in multiple-campus systems and institutions not previously accredited which merge or affiliate with an accredited institution are not considered accredited if they are operationally separate as defined above. These institutions or units are expected to seek accreditation through the usual procedures relating to application for membership. Off-campus programs not classified as operationally separate by the Commission are included in the Commission’s evaluation of the parent institution, regardless of location.

Separate accreditation implies separate membership in the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. Each separately accredited unit will be identified in the Directory and will contribute to its support by payment of appropriate dues as stipulated in the Commission’s schedule of dues and fees. Consistent with that schedule, separate units may be assessed dues based on that unit’s operating budget even if the unit is not separately accredited, if its current funds, expenditures and transfers, or total expenses are not included in the parent institution’s report of institutional finances.

Evaluating Multi-Unit Institutions. Committees evaluating multi-unit systems can be of significant assistance to individual units if the visiting evaluation committee fully understands the context within which each unit operates, plans, develops, and strives fully to achieve its objectives. Whatever the degree of autonomy of each unit, recognition must be given to decision making at the central administrative office or system level.

While every attempt should be made to understand the central or system administrative office operations or that of the primary campus, actual evaluation is focused on the units. Each unit must be viewed in its relationship to the total system, but its educational effectiveness can best be assessed by devoting attention to its particular endeavors.

The following procedures apply to evaluating multi-unit institutions:

1. Self-study reports should be prepared to reflect the relationship between the central office or primary campus and the units of the institution. The approach to be used in the self-study process need not be the same at each unit, unless a common self-study is agreed upon that would give adequate attention to the individual units.

2. Descriptive and analytical information on the central/system office or primary campus will be included in or will accompany the unit self-study.

3. Plans will be made to include a visit to the central office or primary campus. This may require additional time for the committee visit, a special visit prior to the individual unit evaluation, or a return at a later date, but in each case plans will be developed in collaboration with the institution, the committee chair, and other key persons.

4. The plan for visits to units of a multi-unit system/organization will vary according
to the nature and complexity of the organizational structure. In some cases, all units will be evaluated simultaneously. In others, units will be evaluated in sequence or in stages on a well defined schedule. In no case will a major unit of a system be excluded from the evaluation process.

5. Evaluation committees will be assembled according to #4 above. There will be either separate evaluation committees assigned for each unit or a single evaluation committee of sufficient size to cover all units in the case of the parent institution being evaluated at the same time of its branch units.

6. A committee chair will be designated for each unit, or a single chair will be appointed to coordinate the work of other persons designated to assist with the chairing responsibilities.

7. In the case of preliminary visits to individual units by Commission staff, they need not be made concurrently but coordination through the central office or primary campus will be necessary. Preliminary visit(s) will involve central institutional administrators, chief unit administrators and, others to be designated by the institution’s CEO.

8. All arrangements for these visits should be mutually agreed to in writing by the institution and the Commission.

9. Consistent with the Commission’s schedule of dues and fees, an additional fee will be assessed for each site visited by the evaluation committee.

**Substantive Change.** Substantive changes within institutions or separately accredited units are subject to review by the Commission. Substantive change is one which significantly alters the mission, goals, or objectives of an institution; alters the scope; alters the ownership or control; affects significantly the institution’s ability to support existing and proposed programs; or approves an institution at a new degree level, instruction constituting at least 50 percent of a degree program at a new geographic location, or instruction in a significantly different format. Prior approval of the plan for substantive change is required before the change is included in the previously granted candidacy or accreditation status. (See Policy A-2 **Substantive Change.**)

Adopted 1974/Revised 1999

**Policy B-8 Dual Accreditation**

Any institution seeking or holding accreditation from more than one institutional accrediting body recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) or the United States Department of Education must describe itself in identical terms to each recognized institutional accrediting body with regard to purpose, governance, programs, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituents, and must keep each accrediting body apprised of any change in its status with one or another accrediting body.

In accordance with 34 CFR 602.28(b), if the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
knows, or has reasonable cause to know that an institution it accredits or preaccredits is the subject of:

1) a pending or final action brought by a State agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution’s legal authority to provide postsecondary education in the State;

2) a decision by a recognized accrediting agency to deny accreditation or preaccreditation;

3) a pending or final action brought by a recognized accrediting agency to suspend, revoke, withdraw, or terminate the institution’s accreditation or preaccreditation; or

4) Probation or an equivalent status imposed by a recognized accrediting agency,

the Commission will not grant initial or renewed accreditation or preaccreditation to the institution unless a review of the institution’s accreditation or preaccreditation determines that it is in compliance with the Commission’s accreditation and preaccreditation criteria. If, following that review, the Commission acts to grant initial or renewed accreditation or preaccreditation to the institution, the Commission provides the Secretary, within 30 days of its action, a thorough and reasonable explanation, consistent with its standards, why the action of the other accrediting agency does not preclude the Commission’s action to grant initial or renewed accredited or preaccreditation to the institution.


Policy B-9 Training for New Commissioners

In an effort to ensure that Commissioners are qualified by training as well as experience, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall require that all new Commissioners undergo appropriate training to enable them to effectively fulfill their responsibilities as members of the Commission. Accordingly, all new Commissioners will attend, prior to their first Commission meeting, an orientation session that addresses the responsibilities of a new Commissioner, the practices and procedures of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, and the standards and policies for accreditation.

In addition, all new Commissioners will attend an evaluators’ training workshop and will accompany a committee chair and the evaluation committee as an observer on an on-site visit to an institution prior to serving as the chair of an accreditation visit.

Adopted 1997

Policy B-10 Selection and Representation of Commissioners and of
**Evaluation Committees**

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall include representation of both administrative and academic personnel. Procedures will be followed that are designed to achieve a balance of both institutional type and institutional role.

The Commission endeavors to achieve an appropriate balance of both administrative and academic personnel through a periodic, systematic review of its selection procedures in an effort to ensure the representation of both administrators and academicians.

In addition, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall include representation of both administrative and academic personnel on its evaluation committees.

Adopted 1997

**Policy B-11 Notification to the United States Department of Education**

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall notify the Department of Education, the appropriate State postsecondary review entity, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public of these types of decisions within thirty (30) days of any action taken.

**Providing Information to the Department of Education Regarding an Institution’s Failure to Comply with its Title IV Responsibilities or Engagement in Fraud or Abuse**

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall provide to the Department of Education the name of any institution accredited by the Commission that it has reason to believe is failing to meet its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities or is engaged in fraud or abuse.

**Providing Department of Education Information on an Institution’s Compliance with Title IV**

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall provide, upon the request of the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, information it possesses regarding an accredited or preaccredited institution’s compliance with its Title IV, HEA program responsibilities, including its eligibility to participate in Title IV, HEA programs, for the purpose of assisting the Secretary in resolving problems with the institution’s participation in these programs.

**Notification to U.S. Department of Education of Commission Action on Institutions Under Negative Sanction by Other Recognized Accrediting Agencies**

Under no circumstances shall the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities take an accrediting action on an institution that is under an interim action by its respective state or has been notified that its licensure is threatened. If the Commission did grant initial or continued accreditation under the conditions outlined in 34 CFR 602.28(b), it would provide the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education within 30 days with a thorough explanation, consistent with its accreditation standards, as to why the previous action by a recognized institutional accrediting agency or the State does not preclude the agency’s granting of accreditation or preaccreditation.

**Providing Information to the Department of Education Regarding Changes in Its Policies, Procedures**
or Accreditation Standards

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall provide the Department of Education information regarding any proposed changes in its policies, procedures, or accreditation standards that might alter its scope of recognition or its compliance with recognition requirements.

Notification of Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities’ Accreditation Decisions

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall notify the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, the appropriate State postsecondary review entity, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public of the following types of decisions:

(1) A final decision by the Commission to award initial accreditation or preaccreditation to an institution.

(2) A final decision by the Commission to deny, withdraw, suspend, or terminate the accreditation or preaccreditation of an institution.

(3) A final decision by the Commission to place an institution on Probation or issue a Show-Cause order.

In addition, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall notify the above mentioned parties of these other types of decisions:

(4) A decision by an accredited institution to withdraw voluntarily from accreditation or from preaccreditation status.

(5) A decision by an accredited institution to let its accreditation or preaccreditation lapse.

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall notify the Department of Education, the appropriate State postsecondary review entity, the appropriate accrediting agencies, and the public of these types of decisions within thirty (30) days of any action taken.

Adopted 1997

Policy B-12 Program Length and Tuition and Fees
The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall compile and maintain a list of all member, accredited and candidate, institutions indicating both their tuition and fee structure for in-state as well as out-of-state students, and the length of the program offered. This list shall be available to be mailed out to any student, institution, or member of the public upon request.

In addition, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities requires that institutions indicate in their Annual Report submitted yearly to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities any change in their institution’s fees or tuition rates. If there is a change, the institution is required to state the amount of that change. Further, the Commission requires that the institution shall make that information about tuition charges available to students and the public by publishing it in the college’s or university’s catalog and other publications. Institutions should inform their students that they may obtain information about tuition charges at comparable institutions accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities by directly contacting the Commission office in Redmond, Washington.

Adopted 1997

**Policy B-13 Reviewing Accreditation Standards to Ascertain Their Validity and Reliability**

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall undertake a systematic review of its accreditation standards to ensure their validity and reliability on a periodic basis. The Commission will conduct a systematic, comprehensive evaluation process at least once every five years. As part of the review process the Commission will seek to ascertain whether the established time frame of five years is adequate to achieve the desired ends or whether the review process should be undertaken during more or less frequent intervals.

Adopted 1998

**Policy B-14 Providing Advanced Public Notice of Proposed Accreditation Criteria to Member Institutions and Other Interested Parties**

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities shall provide its member institutions and other identified communities of interest advanced public notice of proposed new or revised accreditation standards as well as an opportunity for these parties to comment on the proposed changes.

Adopted 1997
Policy B-15 Dissemination of Directory of Accredited and Preaccredited Institutions

The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities publishes a directory of its affiliated, member and candidate, institutions on an annual basis. This directory, updated annually, is mailed to member institutions, state departments of education, other regional accrediting agencies, specialized accrediting agencies, and the U.S. Department of Education as well as other interested individuals and organizations upon request.

Adopted 1997
ABILITY TO BENEFIT. The use of a standardized test approved by U.S. Department of Education to determine the ability of a student to benefit from the instruction available from an institution. The test must be independently administered in accordance with U.S. Department of Education regulations.

ACADEMIC CALENDAR. A chronology of dates for a scheduled period of instruction which includes an institution’s dates for class registration, additions and deletions to course schedules, beginning and ending for the term of instruction, institutionally-scheduled examinations, and deadline for applications for graduation.

ACADEMIC CREDIT. Credit applicable toward a degree or credential at the institution awarding it, accepting it on transfer, or acknowledging equivalency from learning experience adequately substantiated. See Credit, Unit of.

ACADEMIC YEAR. Instruction equivalent of two semesters of approximately 15 weeks each or 3 quarters of approximately 10 weeks each, either of which may include examination days. (See Credit, Unit of.)

ACREDITATION. The process by which a private, non-governmental body evaluates an educational institution or program of study and formally recognizes it as having met certain predetermined criteria or standards. The process involves initial and periodic self-study and evaluation by peers. Accreditation implies stimulation toward quality improvement beyond the minimum standards specified by the accrediting body. The essential purpose of the accreditation process is to provide a professional judgment as to the quality of the educational institution or program offered and to encourage continual improvement thereof.

ACREDITATION ASSOCIATION OR COMMISSION. A recognized and voluntary nongovernmental body established to administer accrediting procedures. An accrediting body is formally acknowledged, or recognized, as being a reliable authority concerning the quality of education or training offered by educational institutions or programs by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. It is a voluntary organization and not established by the federal or state governments or any agency, department, or office thereof. An accrediting body may be identified by scope (institutional or specialized program) or area (regional, interregional, or national).

ACREDITATION - INSTITUTIONAL. A status of affiliation with a recognized accrediting body that accords accreditation to an entire institution, indicating that each of its parts is contributing to the achievement of the institution’s objectives, although not necessarily all on the same level.

ACREDITATION - REGIONAL. Institutional accreditation awarded by an accreditation body within a prescribed geographic region of the United States as recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

ACREDITATION - SPECIALIZED. A status of affiliation accorded a unit or program by a recognized specialized accrediting body. The unit accredited may be a school, department, program, or curriculum. It may be a part of a total educational institution or may be an independent, specialized institution.

ACREDITATION LIAISON OFFICER. An individual selected by the chief executive officer of an institution to work with appropriate individuals or agencies on matters of accreditation.
Accreditation Status. Formal recognition given an institution or specialized program for meeting established standards of educational quality, as determined by regional, national, or specialized nongovernmental accrediting bodies.

Acronyms.

AACRAO American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
ACE American Council on Education
ALO Accreditation Liaison Officer
CAEL Council for Adult and Experiential Learning
CEU Continuing Education Unit
CHEA Council for Higher Education Accreditation
CLEP College Level Examination Program
CUBA College and University Business Administration
FASB Financial Accounting Standards Board
FTE Full-time Equivalent
GED General Education Development Testing Program
GPA Grade Point Average
GRE Graduate Record Examination
IPEDS Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System
NACUBO National Association of College and University Business Officers
NAFSA National Association of Foreign Student Affairs
NWCCU Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
NCHEMS National Center for Higher Education Management Systems
TOEFL Test of English as a Foreign Language
USDOE U.S. Department of Education

Admission Policy. The rationale which determines the applicants who shall be admitted to an institution. Consideration is given to the role assigned to the institution by its governing body; the programs, resources, and facilities of the institution; and the qualifications and goals of the applicant.

Adverse Accrediting Action. The denial or withdrawal of accreditation or candidate status by a recognized accreditation association or commission.

Appeal. A petition for reconsideration of a negative decision by a recognized accreditation association or commission in accordance with due process as described in the appeal procedures.

Approval. The official act of a state department of education or other recognized agency having official authority certifying that a unit of educational organization (a school, institute, college, university, or specialized program of studies) complies with the minimum legal requirements of such units. Official approval, granted by governmental agencies or the governing body of a school system, is distinguished from accreditation, which is accorded by voluntary nongovernmental accrediting agencies.

Branch Campus. A location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus and (1) is permanent in nature; (2) offers at least 50% of the courses of an educational program leading to a degree, certificate, or other educational credential; (3) has its own faculty and administrative organization; and (4) has its own budgetary and hiring authority (34 CFR 600.2).
Candidate for Accreditation. Candidate for Accreditation is a preaccreditation affiliate status with the Commission following a specified procedure for application, institutional self-study, and on-site evaluation. Candidacy is not accreditation and does not ensure eventual accreditation. It is an indication that an institution complies with the Eligibility Requirements and is progressing toward accreditation.

Catalog. The official bulletin or publication of a higher education institution stating admission and graduation requirements, majors, minors, current offerings, costs, faculty, and all other significant information necessary for an accurate understanding of the institution.

Certification. A process by which an agency or association grants recognition to an individual who has met certain predetermined qualifications specified by that agency or association.

College. Generic term to denote any of the postsecondary educational institutions (including universities) eligible for accreditation or accredited by the Commission and does not refer to a specialized unit of a university. It is used as a synonym for “institution.”

Commission. Refers to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Community Service. See Public Service.

Complaint. A written complaint to the Commission against a member or candidate institution. (See Policy A-14 Complaints Regarding Member or Candidate Institutions.)

Comprehensive Self-Study. An institution’s self-analysis of its educational quality and institutional effectiveness in relation to its stated mission and goals.

Conflict of Interest. A real or perceived circumstance that compromises an individual’s capacity to render a fair and impartial decision regarding the accreditation status of an institution.

Consultant. A person who gives professional or technical advice and assistance. The services may or may not be performed under contract.

Continuing Contract. A contract which continues automatically from year to year without action on the part of the governing board, but may be terminated through appropriate action on the part of the parties involved.

Continuing Education Unit (CEU). A unit of measure for non-credit activities. (See Policy A-9 Non-Credit, Extension, and Continuing Education Studies.)

Cooperative Education. A combination program of study and practice - conducted on an alternating schedule of half days, weeks, or other period of time - providing employment for students with organized on-the-job training and correlated higher education instruction.

Correspondence, Instruction by. Instruction approved through appropriate institutional channels, which provides for the systematic exchange of course materials, by mail, between the instructor and student.

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA). A national organization representing institutional and specialized accrediting agencies and the general public.
Course. A single instructional subject commonly described by title, number, credits, and expected learning outcomes in the college catalog or bulletin.

Credentials. (1) A certificate stating that the student has been graduated from a certain curriculum or has passed certain subjects; (2) a statement signed by proper authority certifying that a person is authorized to perform certain functions or has been designated as an official representative; (3) a detailed record of an applicant for a position, usually including transcripts of academic records and testimonials relative to previous experience, performance, and character; (4) the confidential file of an applicant sent to prospective employers.

Credit, Unit of. A quantification of student academic learning. One unit represents what a typical student might be expected to learn in one week (40-45 hours including class time and preparation) of full-time study. Thus a six-week summer session might, if full-time, equate to six units. An alternative norm is one unit for three hours of student work per week (e.g., one hour of lecture and two of study or three of laboratory) for ten weeks a quarter or 15 weeks a semester. A full-time undergraduate student program is usually about 15 units but not less than 12; a full-time graduate program is usually 10 to 12 units. Considerable excess allowed on ground of student ability should be subject to special analysis and approval.

Degrees

Associate of Arts (A.A.), Associate of Science (A.S.), Applied Associate of Science (A.A.S.). A lower division undergraduate degree normally representing about two years (60 semester or 90 quarter units) of college study or its equivalent in depth and quality of learning experience. The A.A. degree implies more liberal education orientation, the A.S. degree implies a more applied education orientation, and the A.A.S. implies a highly applied educational orientation.

Bachelor of Science (B.A.), Bachelor of Science (B.S.). An undergraduate degree normally representing about four years (120 semester or 180 quarter units) of college study, or its equivalent in depth and quality of learning experience. The B.A. degree implies a more liberal education orientation and the B.S. degree implies a more applied educational orientation.

Master of Arts (M.A.), Master of Science (M.S.). A first graduate degree, representing about one year (30 semester or 45 quarter units) of post-baccalaureate study, or its equivalent in depth and quality. The distinctions between M.A. and M.S. are similar to those between B.A. and B.S. Some M.A. and M.S. degrees are merely continuations at a higher level of undergraduate work without basic change in character. Some degrees emphasize research while others emphasize practical application of knowledge in the field.

M.B.A., M.P.A., M.S.W., etc. Professional masters degrees requiring up to two years or equivalent of coursework beyond the baccalaureate level.

Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.). A research-oriented doctoral degree which indicates the recipient has done, and is prepared to do, original research in a major discipline. Usually requires three years or more of graduate-level coursework level requiring an original research thesis or project.

Ed.D., Psy.D., M.D., J.D., etc. Professional doctoral degrees with emphasis on application of knowledge in the field. Normally requires three or more years of carefully prescribed graduate-level coursework.
Disclosure and Confidentiality of Information. Every institution seeking candidacy, accreditation, or reaccreditation is obliged to provide any information with respect to the institutional affairs pertinent to determination of the institution’s accreditation status. It is the obligation of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities to maintain the confidentiality of the institutional self-study and report of the evaluation committee.

Distance Education. A formal educational process in which the majority of the instruction occurs when student and instructor are not in the same place. Instruction may be synchronous or asynchronous. Distance education may employ correspondence study, or audio, video or electronically mediated technologies.

Educational Auditing Standards. Measures of an acceptable level of quality, as determined by an independent auditor (who is expert in accounting principles and practices and in auditing methods). The objective of the audit process is an opinion upon the fairness of the presentation of results of operations for a given period of time and upon the fairness of the presentation of the financial position at the end of the given period of time.

Eligibility, Federal Government. A status granted by the federal government indicating that an institution qualifies for consideration as a participant in a federal funding project.

Eligibility Requirements, Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities. The characteristics of an institution and the conditions required by the Commission for consideration as a Candidate for Accreditation, for initial accreditation, and for continued membership.

Evaluation. A process periodically and jointly conducted by the institution and the accrediting agency, which may take a number of forms. It will include the following, regardless of form: 1) the institution’s self-study report; 2) the evaluation committee’s report; 3) the institution’s response to the evaluation committee report; 4) the accrediting commission’s action; 5) the institution’s follow-up action to the self-study, the evaluation committee’s report, and the accrediting commission’s action.

Evaluation Committee. A committee, comprised of trained peer-evaluators from an accrediting association’s member institutions and chosen specifically for competencies relevant to the institution being evaluated, which conducts an on-site evaluation based upon the institution’s self-study report and supporting documentation. The committee’s major assignment is to make a considered group judgment, as informed colleagues, on the institution’s educational quality effectiveness, evaluated in context with institutional mission, goals, and characteristics. At the conclusion of an evaluation visit, the chair of the committee reports orally on the committee’s major findings.

Experiential Learning. Learning acquired from work and life experiences, mass media, and independent reading and study.

External Degree Program. A course of study different from traditional degree programs, which may or may not require on-campus study or residence, and which often relies heavily on independent study and examination.

Faculty. As used here, refers to instructional faculty, not librarians, administrators, counselors, etc., who may have faculty rank. Full-time faculty: those employed by the institution, the majority of whose assignment is class or course instruction, but which may also include institutional non-class-related faculty
responsibilities such as academic advisement, curricular development and review, faculty selection and evaluation, and the like. Those performing these functions may also be considered full-time faculty if a portion of their assignment is research, service, or academic administration. Part-time or Adjunct Faculty: faculty whose major responsibility is not related to the institution in question; customarily assigned one or two classes with class-related responsibilities only.

Full-time Student. Full-time status is usually computed as 15 credits per term for undergraduate and 10 to 12 credits per term for graduate students.

General Education. An essential collegiate-level component of associate and baccalaureate degree programs designed to foster effective independent lifelong learning by introducing students to the content and methodology of the major domains of knowledge.

General Education Development (GED). A battery of tests taken by adults who did not graduate from high school, to measure the extent to which their past experiences have contributed to their attaining the knowledge, skills, and understandings ordinarily acquired through a high school education.

Guidelines. Explanatory statements which amplify the criteria for accreditation or which provide examples of how the requirements may be interpreted to allow for flexibility, yet remain within the framework of the standards or criteria.

Higher Education. Postsecondary education emphasizing degrees and credentials rather than training limited to skill development within a specific trade.

Independent College. College or university with self-perpetuating, or otherwise not publicly chosen, board, and little, if any, direct tax support.

Institution. Educational institutions which have a core of full-time faculty, a separate student body, and a resident administration, and which offer programs comprising a totality of educational experience. (See “College.”)

Institution - Additional Facility. An additional facility or branch is a component part, except for geographic location, of an institution. The additional facility may be a degree-granting division or unit of an institution and legally authorized for a stated purpose in relation to the parent institution and the area served. It may have planned programs leading to undergraduate, graduate, or professional degrees which are granted by or in the name of the parent institution.

Institution - Operationally Separate. An institution that is under the general control of a parent institution or a central administration in a multi-unit system. It has a core of full-time faculty, a separate student body, a resident administration, and it offers programs comprising a totality of educational experience as defined by the appropriate regional accrediting body.

Institution – Community and Technical Colleges. Institutions that grant an associate degree.

Institution - Senior Colleges and Universities. Institutions that grant a baccalaureate degree and/or graduate degree.
Institutional Integrity. The pursuit of knowledge governed and administered with respect for individuals in a nondiscriminatory manner while responding to the educational needs and legitimate claims of the constituencies it serves, as determined by its mission and goals.

IPEDS. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System is designed to gather institutional level data, allows aggregation at various levels, and permits controls on data quality through follow-up and editing.

Level. Refers to placement of students at a certain level of college work, i.e., lower division (first two years) or associate degree, upper division (last two years) or bachelor’s degree, first level graduate or master’s degree, terminal professional degree or Ph.D.

Licensure. The process by which an agency of the government grants permission 1) to persons meeting predetermined qualifications to engage in a given occupation and/or use of a particular title, or 2) to institutions to perform specified functions.

Member Institution. An institution that has met the conditions of eligibility and standards and has been granted accreditation status by an accrediting body.

Mission and Goals Statement. The statement in which an institution identifies its mission and goals. It reflects institutional values and encompasses the intellectual and affective development of the student, the pursuit of knowledge, the study of values and attitudes, and public service. The institution’s statement of mission describes its particular philosophic stance and serves as a guide for educational planning. It also operates as a frame of reference for decisions about such practical matters as student admission and retention, the curriculum, the faculty, and allocation of funds.

Negative Action. An action by a recognized accreditation association or commission to deny or withdraw candidacy or accreditation, issue or continue a Show-Cause order, or issue or continue Probation.

Planning. The process by which the mission and goals of an institution are determined and the means to achieve them are specified. Institutional planning incorporates the institution’s statement of purpose and comprehensive self-study with plans that take into account the possible need for modification of goals, clientele served, programs offered, educational methods employed, and modes of support utilized.

Postsecondary Education. Education offered by institutions primarily to individuals 18 or older; admission may or may not require a high school diploma or equivalent credential.

Postsecondary Institutions, Types of.

A Common Language for Postsecondary Accreditation: Categories and Definitions for Data Collection, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) and Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA), 1985

a. Baccalaureate or Higher. Institutions or subsidiary elements whose primary purpose is the provision of postsecondary education and that confer at least a baccalaureate or higher degree in one or more programs. The categories within this group are characterized by type of award, number of programs, and number of awards conferred.
1. **Doctoral Granting.** Characterized by a significant level of activity in and commitment to doctoral-level education as measured by the number of doctorate recipients and the diversity in doctoral program offerings. These institutions must grant a minimum of 30 doctoral-level degrees in three or more doctoral-level program areas on an annual basis. Included in the counts of doctorate degrees are the first-professional (M.D., D.D.S., D.O., D.V.M.).

   a) Without a Medical School. Institutions that meet the criteria for doctoral-granting institutions but do not grant any of the following first-professional degrees: M.D., D.D.S., D.O., or D.V.M.

   b) With a Medical School. Institutions that meet the criteria for doctoral-granting institutions and that grant any of the following first-professional degrees: M.D., D.D.S., D.O., or D.V.M.

2. **Comprehensive.** Characterized by a strong, diverse postbaccalaureate program (including first-professional) but not engaged in significant doctoral-level education. Specifically, this category includes institutions not considered specialized schools in that the number of doctoral-level degrees granted is less than 30 or in that fewer than three doctoral-level programs are offered. In addition, these institutions must grant a minimum of 30 postbaccalaureate degrees and grant degrees in three or more postbaccalaureate programs.

   a) Without a Medical School. Institutions that meet the criteria for doctoral-granting institutions but do not grant any of the following first-professional degrees: M.D., D.D.S., D.O., or D.V.M.

   b) With a Medical School. Institutions that meet the criteria for doctoral-granting institutions and that grant any of the following first-professional degrees: M.D., D.D.S., D.O., or D.V.M.

3. **General Baccalaureate.** Characterized by their primary emphasis on general undergraduate baccalaureate education. They are not significantly engaged in postbaccalaureate education. Included are institutions not considered specialized institutions and in which the number of postbaccalaureate degrees granted is less than 30 or in which fewer than three postbaccalaureate-level programs are offered, but that grant baccalaureate degrees and grant degrees in three or more baccalaureate programs. Additionally, over 25% of the degrees granted must be at the baccalaureate level or above.

4. **Specialized.** These baccalaureate or postbaccalaureate institutions are characterized by a programmatic emphasis in one area (plus closely related specialties). The programmatic emphasis is measured by the percentage of degrees granted in the program area. An institution granting over 60% of its baccalaureate degrees in one program area, or granting over one-half of its degrees in one program area and granting degrees in fewer than five baccalaureate programs, is considered a specialized institution. These schools include divinity, medical, other health, engineering, business and management, fine arts, law, education, and U.S. service schools.

   b. Two-Year. Institutions or subsidiary elements whose primary purpose is the provision of postsecondary education and that confer at least a two-year formal award (certificate or associate degree), or have a two-year program in one or more program areas. These institutions cannot award a baccalaureate degree.
President. A generic term signifying the chief executive officer of an institution.

Prior Experiential Learning (credit for). Credit granted toward the award of a certificate or degree for prior learning experiences that can be shown through various means of assessment to be the equivalent of learning gained through formal collegiate instruction.

Private College. See Independent College

Probation. A negative sanction indicating that a candidate or accredited institution fails to respond to the concerns (including Warning) communicated by the Commission, or when it deviates significantly from the Commission’s standards, policies, or eligibility requirements, but not to such an extent as to warrant the issuing of a Show-Cause order or withdrawal of candidacy or accreditation, the institution may be placed on Probation for a specified period of time. While on Probation, the institution may be subject to monitoring by the Commission, which may include a requirement to submit periodic prescribed reports and to receive visits for evaluation by representatives of the Commission. In addition, during the period of Probation, any new site or degree program initiated by the institution will be regarded as a major substantive change. (See Policy A-2 Substantive Change). The candidate or accredited status of the institution continues during the probation period.

Program. A systematic, usually sequential, grouping of courses, forming a considerable part, or all, of the requirements for a degree or a credential. May refer to the total educational offering of an institution.

Public College. College or university with governing board elected or appointed by elected officials and supported by public funding.

Public Representative. A public member of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities is any individual who represents the public interest and is not:
(1) An employee, member of the governing board, owner, or shareholder of, or consultant to, an institution that applied for accreditation or is currently accredited or preaccredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities;
(2) A member of any trade association or membership organization related to, affiliated with, or associated with the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities; or
(3) A spouse, parent, child, or sibling of an individual identified in paragraph (1) or (2) above.

Public Service. Service of a practical nature to the external (non-academic) community - local, regional, national, or international. Often includes public lectures and performances, various forms of applied research, non-credit courses, and agricultural or other similar forms of extension.

Quality - Educational. The achievement of student learning outcomes as described either in terms of a level of intellectual proficiency or amount of cognitive growth.

Reapplication. The procedure used when an institution that had not been granted accreditation because of deficiencies noted in the evaluation report again seeks accreditation after correcting the deficiencies.
Reasonable Assurance. An indication by a regional association that an unaccredited institution appears to have the potential and to be making appropriate progress which, if continued, will result in its meeting accreditation requirements on a normal schedule. See Candidate for Accreditation.

Recommendation. May refer either to the evaluation committee’s final statements or its confidential advice to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities regarding an institution’s accreditation or candidacy status.

Recommendation, Confidential. An evaluator’s private non-binding recommendation to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities regarding the accreditation of an institution.

Related Instruction. A recognizable body of instruction in program-related areas of communication, computation, and human relations for applied or specialized associate degree or certificate programs of 30 semester credits or 45 quarter credits in length.

Reports Requested by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

1. Annual Report

This is a brief form made available each spring to candidate and member institutions to be completed and returned to the Commission office. The purpose of the form is to help the Commission be informed of significant changes taking place at institutions, such as substantive changes, serious budget deficits, crucial enrollment changes, etc.

2. Interim Candidacy Report

This is a written report required as a condition of being a Candidate for Accreditation. It is always accompanied with an on-site visit by an evaluation committee.

3. Comprehensive Self-Study and Evaluation Committee Visit

A comprehensive self-study and an evaluation committee visit are requested by the Commission in these instances:

a) during the fifth year following initial accreditation;
b) at least once every ten years for all member institutions;
c) in the academic year following graduation of the first class at a higher degree level higher; and
d) when the Commission, at any time, has lost confidence in the capability of an institution to fulfill its mission and goals.

4. Interim Report - Focused

This is a written report to address one or more specified concerns that requires validation and evaluation of institutional progress regarding concern(s) identified by the Commission. The focused interim report and visit do not replace the regular fifth-year interim report and visit.
5. **Interim Report - Regular**

This is a written report that is prepared by continuing members during the fifth year after a full-scale evaluation. It is to address two areas:

a) institutional progress made regarding the recommendations of the evaluation committee report of the last full-scale evaluation (usually found at the end of the report); and

b) significant institutional developments and changes since the last full-scale evaluation.

An interim report is always coupled with an on-site visit by one or more Commission representatives. When the interim report and the evaluator’s report are considered at the subsequent Commission meeting, an institutional representative is not expected to attend the discussion.

6. **Progress Report**

This is a written report to address one or more specified concerns of the Commission. A progress report is not accompanied by an evaluation visit by a Commission representative.

7. **Third-Year Progress Report**

This is a written report required of all newly accredited institutions. A new member institution is to submit a written progress report in the third year following the year of initial accreditation.

**Research.** May refer to collection of institutional data useful for self-analysis or planning (institutional research), to that carried on by teacher-scholars in order to remain current in their fields of expertise, or to that which expands the field of knowledge or its application (“pure” or “applied” research).

**Sanctions.** May be applied to an institution when the Commission concludes that the institution is in serious noncompliance with one or more Commission standards, policies, or eligibility requirements. The intent of a sanction is to highlight the immediate need for an institution to bring itself into compliance. **Warning** is a private sanction while **Probation, Show-Cause** are public sanctions.

**Scholarship (Scholarly Activity).** Commitment to the pursuit of truth or knowledge. All faculty in institutions of higher education are expected to devote continuing study to their respective fields of knowledge or professions in order that they may be aware of the most recent developments and information in their fields and thus be prepared to perform their teaching function at an appropriate level.

**Self-Evaluation or Self-Study.** See Comprehensive Self-Study.

**Show-Cause.** When the Commission finds that an institution has not taken satisfactory steps to address identified concerns or when an institution is found to be in serious non-compliance with the Commission’s accreditation criteria, it may require the institution to **show-cause** why its candidacy or accreditation should not be terminated. In such cases, the burden rests with the institution to demonstrate why its candidacy or accreditation should be continued. The candidate or accredited status of the institution continues during the period of **Show-Cause**, and the institution will be subject to Commission monitoring, which may include a requirement to submit prescribed reports and to receive visits for evaluation by Commission representatives.
Standards (or Criteria) for Accreditation. The criteria, consisting of Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and related Policies, developed by the membership of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities by which an institution is evaluated and admitted for initial and continuing membership.

Substantive Change. A change that significantly alters an institution’s objectives or the scope of its offerings; alters its autonomy, sponsorship, or the locus of control over it; embarks on offering off-campus academic programs for credit; changes the geographic area(s) served; or offers programs or courses for academic credit on a military base. (See Policy A-2 Substantive Change)

Teach-Out. Provision by an institution for the equitable treatment of students if the institution closes or discontinues an educational program before all students enrolled in that program complete it.

Telecommunications, Instructional. Instruction which provides for the systematic exchange of course materials between the instructor and student by electronic communication.

Tenure. The employment status of a faculty or staff member whose employment is not subject to termination by the governing board, except in stipulated circumstances.

Terminal Contract. A contract agreement setting beginning and ending dates of employment of a faculty or staff member with no legal obligation that the expiration of the contract is to be followed by another contract agreement.

Unfunded Student Financial Aid. Refers to that portion of total student financial aid that is purely institutional assistance. It is the total amount of tuition scholarships that is awarded, but is not covered by endowment earnings and annual contributions designated for tuition scholarships, federal, state, or local funding, or monies an outside group contributes for student tuition. It is the amount of total tuition generated from enrollments the institution foregoes to attract and retain students.

University. A large, multi-purpose institution with extensive graduate degree offerings, library, and other resources, and/or several schools with graduate offerings.

Vocational Education. Organized educational programs offering courses or instruction in a sequence or aggregation of competencies that are directly related to preparation for employment in occupations requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree. These programs must include competency-based applied learning that contributes to an individual’s academic knowledge, higher-order reasoning and problem-solving skills, necessary for economic independence as a productive and contributing member of society.

Warning. When the Commission finds that an institution has pursued a course that, if continued, could lead to more serious sanctions, it may issue to the institution a Warning to correct its deficiencies, to refrain from certain activities, or to initiate certain activities within a stated period of time. A Warning is a private sanction and does not affect the candidate or accredited status of the institution.
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