



Washington State University Overview of the Accreditation Process

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Date of Full Scale April 1-3. 2009
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

What is Accreditation?

Accreditation is the oldest and best known seal of higher education quality. Its four roles include

- 1. Sustain/enhance quality**
- 2. Maintain academic value in H.E.**
- 3. Prevent politicizing H.E.**
- 4. Serve the public interest**

Accreditation Expectations

The accreditation process requires institutions to examine their *own goals, operations and achievements*. The process provides expert evaluation by a visiting evaluation committee to evaluate quality and verify compliance.

Accreditation Outcomes

Academic Quality is Enhanced

Achievements are Documented

Accountability is Demonstrated

**Improvement Is Made Based on
Assessment and Evaluation**

Regional Accreditation

Regional accrediting agencies are recognized by the US DOE and CHEA and accredit institutions within a prescribed geographic region.

Regional accreditors accredit entire institutions, not individual programs or subject content areas.

Assurances

**Accreditation affirms that institutions-
Have clearly defined and appropriate
educational objectives;**

**Have conditions under which objectives
can reasonably be achieved;**

**Are substantially accomplishing their
objectives; and**

**Are reasonably organized, staffed, and
supported to continue to do so.**

Benefits

Federal Student Financial Aid

**Federal Funds for Specified
Programs and Services**

Quality Assurance and Integrity

Academic Transferability

The Prestige of Accreditation

Evaluating Quality

Quality cannot always be defined in the same terms for all institutions.

Therefore, an evaluation determines:

- 1) how well the institution's mission and goals are being achieved; and**
- 2) how consistent the M/G's are with Commission's criteria for accreditation.**

Evaluation Criteria

Conditions and principles, agreed upon by member institutions, that characterize educational quality and effectiveness. They are qualitative statements that with evidence, peers may evaluate. Criteria include:

Eligibility Requirements - characteristics and conditions necessary for initial and ongoing accreditation.

Standards – primary criteria by which quality, candidacy, and accreditation are evaluated.

Related Policies – to inform and clarify the standards.

Taxonomy of a Standard

Standard

Standard Number and Title

Example

**Standard Two - Educational Program
and Its Effectiveness**

Standard Element

**Standard Element Number and Title
(Conceptual Framework)**

Example

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

Element Narrative

Standard Element Narrative (Philosophy)

Example

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.

Standard Indicator

Standard Indicator & Declarative Statement (Quality Measures)

Example

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

Standards

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| One | Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness |
| Two | Educational Program & Its Effectiveness |
| Three | Students |
| Four | Faculty |
| Five | Library and Information Resources |
| Six | Governance and Administration |
| Seven | Finance |
| Eight | Physical Resources |
| Nine | Institutional Integrity |

Noteworthy Themes

Standards Are Interrelated.

Repetition among the Standards and Policies emphasizes the interconnected nature of the institution.

Assessment, Evaluation, Measurement, or Judgment of Quality and Effectiveness are explicitly referenced in each standard.

Key Considerations

Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

(Standard Element 1.B)

Educational Program Planning and Assessment

(Standard Element 2.B, Policy 2.2)

General Education/Related Instruction

(Policy 2.1)

Distance Education

(Policy 2.6)

Faculty Evaluation

(Policy 4.1)

Governance System, Board, and Administration

(Standard Elements 6.A, 6.B, 6.C)

Financial Planning, Adequacy, and Management

(Standard Elements 7.A, 7.B, 7.C)

Contractual Agreements with External Organizations

(Policy A-6)

NWCCU Standards & Policies . . .

Do not say how an institution must plan and evaluate.

Do not say institutions must practice a particular model of evaluation

Do not say quantitative evaluation is preferable to qualitative

DO say that qualitative and quantitative must complement each other.

Do say ongoing outcome assessment must be continuous and must be an integral part of institutional planning.

Do not define "adequate", "appropriate", or "sufficient" since they are dictated by institutional mission and goals.

Compass Check

Mapping Direction

If you don't know where you're going, any road will do.

White Rabbit in 'Alice in Wonderland'
Lewis Carroll and George Harrison

Destinations

**If headed in the wrong direction,
going faster isn't better.**

Setting the Bar

**What are your institution's
expectations of itself?**

Institutional Expectation

**Our Expectation Is to
Effectively Fulfill
Our Mission**

Self-Study Goals

- Understand, assess, analyze, evaluate, and improve planning and effectiveness of the institution in fulfilling its mission—not merely defending what already exists;
- Identify educational outcomes and document student achievement of educational outcomes;
- Document that Commission Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Policies are met;
- Accurately, candidly, directly identify strengths, weaknesses, and achievements of institutional activities, structures, and processes.

Quality and Accountability

Does your institution fulfill its mission?

Are institutional goals achieved?

Are intended outcomes realized?

Is institutional integrity maintained?

Does your institution continuously improve?

How do you know?

What is your evidence?

Key Questions

Who are we? (Values)

What do we claim to do? (Mission)

Are we doing it? (Integrity)

How well are we doing it? (Effectiveness)

How do we know? (Evaluation)

What data do we collect? (Evidence)

What do the data tell us? (Analysis)

What are we doing as a result? (Planning)

Model Self-Study Characteristics

Design is appropriate to the institution

**Process is inclusive and internally motivated
with leaders committed to the process**

**Self-study is a critical review of mission, goals,
and practices and assesses and evaluates
effectiveness in achieving its mission & goals**

**Report is data driven, analytical, with minimal
description**

**Self study outcomes are incorporated in
planning to improve institutional effectiveness**

Role of the Steering Committee

Motivate, encourage and support participants

Design the study and translate it into clearly defined structures, roles and tasks

Deliver a clear charge for the tasks and assign individuals/groups to the tasks

Set a realistic schedule and allocate resources needed to complete the tasks

Establish clear channels of communication

Coordinate collection & synthesis of data

Conducting the Self Study

Identify institutional outcomes

Identify criteria that measure intended institutional/program outcomes

Collect data based upon the criteria

Assess, analyze, and evaluate the data

Indicate how results are used in planning

Develop and implement change strategies

Ockham's Razor

The Law of Parsimony

The Simplest, Most Direct Approach Is Usually the Best and the Most Efficient

Writing the Report

Be concise! (200 pages +/- plus appendices)

Editing Carefully

Be candid, forthright and succinct

Flow should be smooth and logical

Avoid jargon

Be brief on narration and description

Rely on data and analysis to support claims

“Speak” in a common voice

Proof final copy for errors and omissions

Provide an Executive Summary

The Self-Study Report

Scholarly, analytical document

Accurately reports the results of self-study

Authentic reflection of the institution

Readable and useful!

Organized around Standards and *Guide for Self Study* (suggested)

Candidly assesses outcomes

Analyzes assessment data

Identifies areas for improvement

Specifies plans to achieve improvement

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Succinct, comprehensive snapshot

Provides institutional context

Major changes since last evaluation

Summary of major findings

Implications

Plans for improvement

Chapter Structure and Contents

Standards Chapters

Organized around the standards

Do not duplicate support documents

Data-based description (just enough!)

Data-based analysis

Data-based evaluation

Conclusions

Plans for improvement

Chapter summary

Summary Chapter

Summary

**Institution-wide synthesis across all
Standards**

Major findings

Conclusions

Plans for institutional improvement

Supporting Documentation

Required Documentation

- Included in body of the report**
- Included in the appendices**
- Accompanying the report**

Required Exhibits

- Summarized in the self-study**
- Included in the appendices**
- Available in the committee room**

Suggested Material

- Suggested items for self-study**
- Made available in the committee room**

Typical Weaknesses

Incongruent mission, goals, & activities

Lack of assessment, analysis, and evaluation

No consequences from the self-study

Little, if any, use of data to document claims

Data not clearly tied to planning, outcomes assessment, or institutional effectiveness

Unsupported statements of apparent fact

Lack of synthesis of issues across Standards

Preparing for the Visit

Identify an institutional liaison for each member of the visiting committee.

Publish Third Party Comment Announcement.

At least 30 days prior to the visit, mail required documents to the Commission office and each Committee member.

Organize exhibits in the Committee room.

Gather computers and support resources in the Committee room.

The Visiting Committee

Represents the Commission

Composed of Peers

Out of state

Similar educational environment

Completed evaluator training

Designated areas of responsibility

Chaired by Commissioner/Seasoned Evaluator

Validates the self-study

Evaluates the institution

Reports findings

Submits confidential recommendation

Anatomy of the Visit

Pre-Visit Meeting

Committee Organizational Meeting

Day 1

Introductory Meeting

Evaluation Activities

Committee Meeting

Day 2

Evaluation Activities

Committee Meeting

Day 3

Final Committee Meeting

Chair Meeting with President

Exit Meeting

Following the Visit

Institution responds to the Evaluation Committee's report to correct errors of fact.

Institution is invited to address the Commission at its next scheduled meeting.

Commission renders a decision based upon:

**Institutional self study;
Evaluation Committee's report;
Response from the institution;
Testimony from Evaluation Committee Chair;
Presentation by the President; and
Evaluation Committee's recommendation.**

Commission Actions

Reaffirm Accreditation

Defer Action

Issue or Continue Warning

Impose or Continue Probation

Issue or Continue Show-Cause Order

Terminate Accreditation



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Questions?

Aspirin?