
Policy on the Development and Review of Commission Policies, Procedures, Guidelines, and Statements

To fulfill its mission of accreditation of institutions of higher education, the Commission develops policies, procedures, and guidelines to explicate and supplement its *Standards for Accreditation*. From time to time, the Commission also approves statements to clarify matters important to accreditation. Through its publications and other means, the Commission makes its policies, procedures, guidelines, and statements known to affiliated institutions and interested others.

As an organization dedicated to self-regulation of educational quality and effectiveness, the Commission is committed to providing member institutions and other communities of interest appropriate opportunities for participation and comment during the development and application of its Standards.

Standards for Accreditation: The Commission's *Standards for Accreditation* articulate dimensions of institutional quality. The Standards both establish the minimum criteria for accreditation and set expectations against which institutions measure their performance and improvement over time. The Standards are regularly re-evaluated every ten years through a collaborative, participatory process involving member colleges, universities, and the public.

Policies (What and Why): Commission policies provide clarification of the expectations required of member and candidate institutions for implementing the *Standards for Accreditation*. In addition, policies are developed to ensure U.S. institutions understand and fulfill U.S. Department of Education requirements the Commission is responsible for applying in its role as a recognized reliable authority on the quality of education. Changes to policies are approved by the Commission – the body representing member and candidate institutions. In the development of policies that are not compulsory and directly affect the expectations for accredited and candidate institutions, the Commission has the option to forward the policy to the membership for input and comment prior to implementation.

Procedures (How-To): Procedures are established to assure the orderly application of the Commission's Standards and policies and to provide the required course of action to be followed by member and candidate institutions. Most procedural statements concern how the decennial evaluation and other institutional reviews are carried out in a way that is both consistent with Commission policy and respectful of institutional differences. Commission staff are responsible for monitoring and updating procedures as needed to reflect current practices, conventions, and institutional feedback.

Guidelines (Best Practices): Guidelines are based on effective practices commonly accepted in higher education to ensure the quality of an institution's programs and services and provide advice to member and candidate institutions and peer evaluators for implementing the accreditation Standards, policies, and procedures. As with its policies, Commission staff are responsible for monitoring and updating guidelines as needed to reflect current practices, conventions, and institutional feedback.

Statements (General Higher Education Issues): Statements are designed to ensure broad public understanding of the Commission and its work by examining issues facing member and candidate institutions. When an issue is identified that may require clarification to support member and candidate institutions, Commission staff create and the Commission endorses the statement.

The Commission will review its policies, procedures, guidelines, and statements at least once every ten years, reaffirming which are durable and useful and seeking institutional comment on those for which significant changes are proposed. In addition, existing policies, procedures, guidelines, and statements are reviewed when there are changes in the Standards, in legal or federal requirements, or in other circumstances that may require modification. Per federal regulation, if the Commission determines at any point during its systematic program of review that it needs to make changes to its policies, the Commission will initiate action within 12 months to make the changes and will complete that action within a reasonable period of time. Such changes will be undertaken with appropriate notice to affiliated institutions and interested others.

To ensure the accuracy, completeness, and integrity of all representations made, and to ensure false, misleading, or materially incomplete statements related to the accreditation of an institution or program are not made, Commission staff are responsible for updating and correcting errors of fact or language in its policies, procedures, guidelines, and statements as they are discovered. Similarly, Commission staff maintain the accuracy and currency of the information provided in its publications and on its website (www.neche.org).

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