

Policy on the Periodic Review of Accredited Institutions

Accreditation is viewed by the New England Commission of Higher Education as a continuing status that, once confirmed, is removed only for cause and then with scrupulous observance of procedural fairness. A responsible accrediting program necessarily includes periodic review of accredited institutions both for their benefit and for the fulfillment of the Commission's accountability to the academic community and to the public. The nature and timing of such reviews vary in accordance with the circumstances at a given institution and with the Commission's judgment as to how it can best serve the institution's needs while simultaneously meeting its broader responsibilities.

At its best, the periodic review of accredited institutions is a creative means of assisting them in the continuous assessment of their educational objectives and their success in fulfilling institutional goals. 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.

The Commission utilizes a variety of mechanisms to review periodically the accreditation status of member institutions. At least once every ten years all institutions must undergo a comprehensive evaluation against the full array of the Commission's standards and policies for the purpose of reaffirming institutional accreditation. For newly accredited institutions the interval between comprehensive evaluations does not exceed five years. Preceded by institutional self-study, these evaluations are undertaken by committees of visitors whose findings and recommendations are reviewed by the Commission.

Between comprehensive evaluations, institutions are required to submit an interim report, typically at the fifth year of a ten-year evaluation cycle. These reports provide a current overview of the institution with respect to the *Standards for Accreditation*, a reflective essay about student learning, and major developments or changes since the previous evaluation. Included is the institution's response to the concerns and recommendations resulting from the last evaluation. The institution is also asked to provide a summary of its plans for the period prior to the next comprehensive evaluation.

Annually, every institution is required to submit a report that provides not only statistical data related to such matters as enrollment and finances but also information about off-campus programming, distance education, contractual relationships, student learning

outcomes, and any significant developments at the institution in the past year that may have a bearing on its accredited status.

At its discretion, the Commission may and often does require from individual institutions reports on specified topics. This focused report may be followed by a limited on-site evaluation for the purpose of validating the contents of the report.

If an institution undergoes significant change or if at any time its ability to meet one or more of the Commission's standards is seriously questioned, the Commission reserves the right to review that institution's accreditation without regard to any previously indicated time pattern.

September, 1982

November 2003

November 2012

Editorial changes: August 2021