

Policy on the Status of Probation

Probation is a public status signifying that the New England Commission of Higher Education has found that the institution fails to meet one or more *Standards for Accreditation* and that the Commission believes the problems can be remedied within a time period specified by the Commission.

An institution is placed on probation by action of the Commission. Prior to taking this action, having determined there is reason to believe that the institution may not meet one or more of the *Standards for Accreditation*, the Commission will provide an opportunity for the institution to show cause why it should not be placed on probation. Failing to show cause, the institution may appeal the Commission's action, in keeping with established procedures. In the show-cause opportunity and any appeal, the burden of proof shall rest with the institution. Until final action is taken on the appeal, the institution's status is unaffected. If the institution appeals and the appeal is denied, probation is effective from the date of the Commission action.

The Commission makes probation public when the decision is final (i.e., when the institution does not appeal or when the appeals process is completed and the decision is upheld). The Commission, at its discretion, may make probation public before the decision is final or the appeal is completed. In so doing, the Commission will provide information about the appeal process.

An institution on probation must take appropriate action to bring itself into compliance with the Commission's Standards within the time period specified by the Commission in its letter to the institution. Institutions for which the longest degree program is at least four years will have a maximum period of four years to come into compliance with Commission Standards; institutions for which the longest degree program is two years will have three years to come into compliance; and institutions for which the longest degree program is at least one year but less than two years will have a maximum of eighteen months. In placing an institution on probation, the Commission may specify a shorter period of time during which the institution must demonstrate it has come into compliance with the Standards or face the loss of its accreditation. If the institution does not come into compliance within the specified time period, the Commission will withdraw accreditation unless the Commission, for good cause, extends the period for achieving compliance. Institutions that come into compliance within the time period specified will be removed from probation.

The Commission may limit the probationary status to particular programs that are offered by the institution or particular additional locations of the institution should the

Commission determine that the noncompliance was limited to that particular program or location.

An institution holding probationary status is subject to close scrutiny by the Commission to assess its efforts in remedying those concerns which led to probation. This may include the submission of specified reports and hosting visiting teams. Should the Commission find that conditions have deteriorated to the extent that the institution cannot come into compliance within the specified period, it will take an action withdrawing accreditation unless the Commission, for good cause, extends the period for achieving compliance. In taking an action to withdraw accreditation, the Commission will specify an effective date for the withdrawal which will provide the institution with reasonable time to complete the activities in its teach-out plan or to fulfill the obligations of any teach-out agreement to assist students in transferring or completing their programs.

Notwithstanding the above, 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.

An institution placed on probationary status must receive prior approval from the Commission for the following changes:

- (1) a change in an existing program's method of delivery;
- (2) an aggregate change of 25 percent or more of the clock hours, credit hours, or content of a program since the Commission's most recent accreditation review;
- (3) the development of customized pathways or modified courses or programs to: (i) accommodate and recognize a student's existing knowledge, such as knowledge attained through military service; and (ii) close competency gaps between demonstrated prior knowledge or competency and the full requirements of a particular course of program;
- (4) entering into a contractual arrangement involving courses or programs.

Probation is a public status indicated in any Commission publication or communication about the affected institution. Within 30 days of the final decision to place an institution on probation (i.e., the institution does not appeal or the decision is upheld by the appeals panel), the Commission will notify the institution, the U.S. Secretary of Education, appropriate state agencies, and appropriate accrediting agencies of this decision. The Commission will also provide on its website and in its relevant publications notice of the availability of a statement regarding the institution's probationary status as well as a plan to monitor the institution. This statement will be developed by the Commission in consultation with the institution. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final determination as to its nature and content.

Within seven days of receipt of written notice of the final decision, an institution on probation is obliged to disclose its status as well as the availability of additional information on its probationary status to prospective students, those currently enrolled, and the public, on its website, in its catalog, and in all recruitment materials. The following statement is to be used:

_____ College/University is accredited on probation by the New England Commission of Higher Education, effective _____, because the Commission finds that the institution does not now meet the Standard(s) on _____ and _____. (Add if relevant: This status applies only to the _____ program offered by the institution or the institution's instructional location in _____.) A statement providing further information about the probationary status is available on the website of the New England Commission of Higher Education (<https://neche.org>).

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