
Policy on Innovation

The Commission recognizes the significant changes in society, demographics, technology, and in the expectations by the public for institutions of higher education. As noted in the Preface to the *Standards for Accreditation*, “By design, the Standards as explicated welcome perceptive and imaginative innovation aimed at increasing the effectiveness of higher education.” The Policy on Innovation is designed to support innovation in a way that allows institutions to undertake initiatives that may be or appear to be inconsistent with specific aspects of the standards.

Institutions seeking approval for an initiative under this Policy should submit a proposal that describes the initiative and demonstrates:

1. where the initiative is inconsistent with the Commission’s standards;
2. how the initiative is consistent with federal regulations and the remainder of the Commission’s *Standards for Accreditation*, including the standard on *Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*;
3. how the initiative is consistent with the institution’s mission and fulfills a demonstrated need;
4. how the institution will exercise administrative and fiduciary control of the initiative;
5. that the institution has the financial, human, information, and technological resources necessary to implement the initiative;
6. that students will not be harmed and will receive equivalent benefit from the initiative;
7. what measures and metrics the institution will use to evaluate the initiative, including the use of an external perspective;

The proposal should include the Commission’s cover page, signed by the CEO, that indicates the date of board approval of the initiative and confirms the institution has secured any required state approvals.

Initiatives approved under this Policy will be monitored by the Commission to assess the institution’s experience in implementing the initiative and evaluate the institution’s capacity to continue the initiative at an acceptable level of quality. Such monitoring will include an on-site evaluation, following the format of a substantive change evaluation visit, that will ordinarily be scheduled within two years of the start of the initiative. Based on the results of the on-site evaluation, the Commission may: a) determine that the initiative should come to an end, with a responsible teach-out of students, if relevant; or

b) approve continuation of the initiative, as implemented or with modifications based on the institution's request and/or the results of the on-site evaluation. If the initiative is approved to continue, the Commission will determine future monitoring.

March 2020

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