Self Study Manual

ACCJC Standards Adopted June 2002

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A Publication of the Accrediting Commission
for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

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Development of the Comprehensive Self Study Report

Each institution affiliated with the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges accepts the obligation to undergo periodic evaluation through self study and professional peer review. The heart of this obligation is the conducting of a rigorous self study during which an institution appraises itself in terms of the Commission Standards in accord with its stated purposes. A Comprehensive Self Study is required every six years following initial accreditation. The Commission's expectation on periodic review, found in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*, under the Policy on the Benefits of Accreditation, the Code of Commission Good Practice in Relations with Member Institutions, the Policy on Commission Actions on Institutions, the Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems, and the Policy on the Rights and Responsibilities of ACCJC and Member Institutions in the Accrediting Process governs conditions under which an institution is periodically evaluated.

The *Self Study Manual*, intended for use with the *Guide to Evaluating Institutions*, provides a reference for the conduct of the comprehensive self study. The *Guide to Evaluating Institutions* is a document meant to provoke thoughtful consideration about whether the institution meets the Accreditation Standards at a deeper level than mere compliance. The Guide contains the Standards followed by questions to use in institutional evaluation. These questions provide an interpretation of the standards and how they might be applied to an institution, creating the context for a holistic, systemic assessment of the institution. The Guide also contains a list of potential sources of evidence at the end of each standard.

Self study is part of a three-part process of accrediting an institution. This process includes an institutional self appraisal, an on-site visit by a team of peers, and a review and a decision on the accredited status of the college by the Commission. The institutional self appraisal results in a Report that is an analysis of the on-going and systematic activities and achievements of an institution. The aim of self appraisal is to assess how well an institution meets Accreditation Standards, Eligibility Requirements, and policies of the Commission and to stimulate improvement of educational quality and institutional performance. The ultimate goal of accreditation is to help an institution improve attainment of its own mission-improving student learning and student achievement.

Self appraisal requires a conscious and self-reflective analysis of strengths and weaknesses and an examination of every aspect of institutional function against Commission Standards. Continuous dialogue among members of the college community—a dialogue that is consistently

central to institutional processes and which serves to provide the college community with the means for arriving at a comprehensive institutional perspective—can be especially valuable as the institution engages in self study preparatory to writing a report. Broad involvement in the both the institutional self appraisal and preparation of the Self Study Report enhances the credibility and usefulness of the self study report.

Participation in the Self Study

Included in the self study document submitted to the Commission is a certification page (Appendix A) bearing the signatures of institutional leaders and attesting to broad participation in self appraisal and preparation of the Self Study Report. The certification page reflects the belief that the Self Study Report accurately portrays the nature and substance of the institution. Since the inclusion of all constituencies of the college insures that the self study does not reflect the exclusive view of any one group, the visiting evaluation team will seek to confirm that all campus constituents have participated in the work of the self study.

Students

Although obtaining broad and representative participation from students is often difficult, student leaders are typically enthusiastic participants on the steering committee. Every effort should be made to enlist student participation.

Faculty

All faculty have a major role to play in the self study process. The faculty perspective on the integrity, quality, and effectiveness of the institution is an integral part of the self study document. Adjunct faculty should be included in the process to the extent possible.

Staff

Support staff must be included in the self study process. Employees in all quarters of the institution are knowledgeable about the college and can offer a perspective on how the college is functioning in terms of its stated purposes and Commission Standards. Recognizing the contributions of this constituency is important, as is including them as active participants in the process.

Administrators

Administrators must share in the work of the self study, collaborating with faculty, staff, and students in the search for evidence that the institution meets Commission Standards. The perspective of administrators is an important part of a self study.

Trustees

Governing Board participation can take a variety of forms. Progress reports on the self study are a way to secure Board participation. Note that at the conclusion of the self study, the Board must certify both participation in the process and the Self Study Report.

Others

The institution may elect to include others in the self study such as members of foundation boards, program advisory committee members, or others. Care should be taken in these selections to avoid the perception of conflicts of interest.

The Commission Standards

The four Commission Standards work together in an integrated way and several themes thread throughout them. These themes can provide guidance and structure to self-reflective dialogue and evaluation of institutional effectiveness as the institution prepares its self study. The themes include:

- institutional commitments to providing high quality education congruent with institutional mission, to focusing on student learning, and to periodic reflection on the mission statement;
- evaluation, planning, and improvement in an ongoing and systematic cycle that includes evaluation, goal setting, resource distribution, implementation, and reevaluation;
- student learning outcomes as the conscious and robust demonstration of the effectiveness of institutional efforts to produce and support student learning by developing student learning outcomes at the course, program, certificate, and degree level;
- organization as demonstrated in having adequate staff, resources and organizational structure (communication and decision making structures) to identify and make public learning outcomes, to

evaluate the effectiveness of programs in producing those outcomes, and to make improvements;

- dialogue as a means to ongoing participation in institutional self-reflection based on reliable information about the college's programs and services and evidence on how well the institution is meeting student needs;

- institutional integrity demonstrated by concern with honesty, truthfulness, and the manner in which the institution represents itself to all stakeholders, internal and external

Note—
For a more complete discussion of these themes, see *Guide to Evaluating Institutions*.

Preparation for a self study and a Self Study Report under these integrated standards requires that attention be given to weaving these themes with responses given to a specific standard and its sub-parts. Those charged with the structuring of the process for doing the self study should be mindful of the importance of organizing working committees to address the standards in a coherent way that leads to holistic assessment of institutional quality.

Calendar for Preparation of the Self Study

Since the date for the evaluation visit is often set more than a year in advance, a realistic and detailed timetable for the organization and completion of the self study report should be developed. In most instances, at least a year and a half should be allowed and, for many colleges, there is an advantage to beginning the activities a full four semesters before the scheduled visitation.

A convenient and effective method for establishing a calendar is to work back from the date set for the team visit. In this way, target dates can be set for the completion of activities and the amount of time necessary for meeting goals can be better estimated. Note that the completed self study must be in the hands of the Commission and the team members six weeks before the scheduled visit date.

Several target dates should be kept in mind while planning the calendar. Time needs to be allowed for evidence gathering and interpretation, review of drafts along the way, final editing and rewriting, board of trustees review, and publication. The work of the editor(s) should produce a coherent document that reflects perspectives developed through the process of dialogue.

Resources for the Self Study

Since evaluation and planning are continuous activities complementing and supporting the self study, the Accrediting Commission encourages institutions to integrate the self study with ongoing evaluation and planning, making the six-year self study a culminating activity rather than an activity undertaken only in the last few months before a team visit. Accreditation standards require on-going program review. These data and analyses are a good source for self appraisal.

A primary goal of the self study should be to provide evidence of institutional effectiveness and compliance with Commission standards. This goal requires that the study include data on students and their learning outcomes. All research and other activities reporting student achievement and learning outcomes done by the institution (formal and informal) since the last visit should be reported. Information on good evidence can be found in the Commission's *Guide to Evaluating Institutions*.

Another source of data on outcomes can be found in public institutions and institutions that are part of a system because they generate considerable information in the form of reports to system, state, or federal authorities. Vocational, specially-funded, or specially-accredited programs, for example, sometimes have reporting requirements that generate valuable data on outcomes.

Because institutions must generate and utilize information in ways and forms that are most useful to them in meeting their institutional purposes, the Commission is more interested in how colleges integrate information into their planning process than in the compilation of unanalyzed reports. Creating new reports specifically for the self study is not necessary.

Most institutions routinely and systematically analyze local and regional demographic data. City and county planning offices, associations of regional governments, state government, U.S. census, local school districts, public utilities, business and trade organizations, and other planning interests commonly produce much pertinent data.

In an effort to provide a forum in which individuals and institutions may profit from the experiences of others, the Commission presents self study workshops each year that are designed to assist institutions as they begin to develop their self studies. This forum offers an opportunity for a good deal

of interaction with the Commission. The individuals charged with directing the self study should attend this workshop, which will assist the institution in:

- Establishing college committees for the self study process
- Selecting either a standards-based or theme-based approach to the self study report
- Collecting appropriate materials to be used in preparation of the self study process and report including educational master plans, program reviews, and reports on institutional data and analysis
- Collecting all ACCJC reports since the time of the last accreditation visit
- Identifying institutional goals and objectives and measures of achievement over the last six years
- Locating and addressing the progress on or status of the self-identified action plans from the previous self study report.

The Accreditation Liaison Officer as a Resource

The Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) is the individual appointed by the College to serve as the contact between the campus and the Commission. The ALO assumes responsibility for:

The Self Study

- Attending the self study workshop.
- Facilitating the development of the Self Study Report.
- Facilitating distribution of the Self Study Report.
- Facilitating the team visit.
- Facilitating follow-up with the Commission.

Ongoing Activities

- Staying informed about Commission policies, procedures, and activities
- Promoting a campus culture that is concerned with accreditation.
- Promoting a campus culture that focuses on student learning outcomes.
- Acting as an archivist for the institution's accreditation documents.
- Facilitating preparation of the annual reports and other reports to the Commission.
- Facilitating reports on Substantive Change.

Format and Content for the Comprehensive Self Study Report

1. Cover Sheet

The cover sheet should include the name and address of the institution, a notation that the self study is in support of an application for candidacy, accreditation, or reaffirmation, and date submitted (see Appendix B).

2. Certification Page

The certification page should include the names of the institutional leaders and attesting to a broad participation in the Report preparation (see Appendix A.)

3. Table of Contents

4. An Introduction

a. A history of the institution, including a concise and factual description of the institution since the last comprehensive visit.

b. Demographic information, including summary data on the area served, enrollment figures, and student and staff diversity, including trends and available projections should be provided.

c. A discussion of the results of the last comprehensive visit, including evidence of what the institution 1) has done regarding the previous team's recommendations (each recommendation should be addressed separately), and 2) has accomplished regarding the self-identified action plans from the previous self study report (individually or in summary form).

d. Longitudinal student achievement data, including information on course completion transfer rates, number of degrees and certificates awarded, job placement, licensure, persistence rates, retention rates, graduation rates, basic skills completion, success after transfer, etc.

e. The Commission recognizes institutions are in varying stages of developing and assessing student learning outcomes at the course, program, and degree level. The college should describe evidence gathered to-date, how it is being used, and what plans exist for continued expansion of this effort.

f. Information regarding off-campus sites and centers as well as distance learning efforts should be included. Teams are charged with assuring the Commission of quality of all programs.

g. Information regarding an external independent audit and information demonstrating integrity in the use of federal grant monies.

5. Abstract of the Report

The Abstract should be a summative assessment of how well the institution is meeting the standards as a whole. It should be based on the themes that pervade the standards: institutional commitments; evaluation, planning, and improvement; student learning outcomes; organization; dialogue; and institutional integrity.

6. Organization for the Self Study

In narrative or chart form, this section should show the organization established to conduct the self study. Committees, their chairs and members, timetable, and the person(s) responsible for the overall direction of the self study should be included.

7. Organization of the Institution

Organization charts for the institution and for each major function should be included. Names of individuals holding each position should be provided. Institutions in multi-college districts/systems must specify whether primary responsibility for all or parts of a specific function is at the college or district level. This organizational "map" is important in evaluating the quality of performance of that function and establishing accountability for doing so. Those who are responsible should be involved in reporting about the function and be held accountable for its improvement. As a result, close cooperation between and among the institutions and the district/system office is expected as a part of the institutional self study. Moreover, the Commission recognizes that institutions in a multi-college district/system may have lateral relationships with other institutions in the district/system which must be addressed, and these too are part of the plan for developing the self study.

8. Certification of continued compliance with Eligibility Requirements

The institution should summarize the review conducted to verify that it continues to meet eligibility requirements. Specific guidance for this requirement can be found in Appendix C. These pages include the requirements themselves as well as what documents are needed to verify continued eligibility. The college should develop a statement for each of the 21 criteria. The President and the Chair of the Governing Board must sign a statement certifying compliance.

9. Responses to Recommendations from the Most Recent Comprehensive Evaluation

The self study report must include a section that concisely indicates what the institution has done regarding recommendations made in the last comprehensive team report. Recommendations represent the observations and analyses of a visiting team at the time of the visit and should be considered in light of the Commission's standards and the institution's mission. Evaluation team members will review the responses to previous recommendations.

10. Institutional Self-Evaluation Using Commission Standards

The primary portion of a self study report reviews institutional performance using the accreditation standards and their themes. The following three elements should guide how the self study report is written.

Descriptive Summary

This narrative should spring from institutional dialogue and should be focused on evidence the college has amassed in support of assertions about what it does to meet Commission standards. The underlying question regards what the institution has learned/knows about what it does.

Self Evaluation

The institution is expected to analyze and systematically evaluate what it has learned/knows about itself in terms of the standards. The basic questions have to do with whether or not and to what degree institutional evidence demonstrates that the institution meets the standards and how the institution has reached this conclusion. This analysis should result in actionable conclusions about institutional effectiveness and capacity, informing decisions for what needs to be done to improve.

Planning Agenda

As an institution describes and evaluates its programs and services with reference to each standard, it identifies areas in need of change. This activity yields a planning agenda — a vehicle for institutional improvement. As the institution assesses itself, it should forecast progress it plans to make. The planning agenda should include the following elements:

a. Statements of the plans, activities, and processes (as opposed to tasks) the institution expects to implement as a statement of what the institution thinks it will do.

b. Discussion of the ways the areas identified in need of improvement will be or have been incorporated into the ongoing, systematic evaluation and planning processes of the institution.

c. Discussion of how the outcomes of these plans, activities and processes are expected to improve student learning and foster institutional improvement in general.

Note—
The standards reference specific Commission policies. The self study report should address how the college is in compliance with these policies. A list of these policies will be found in Appendix D. Text of the policies can be found in the *Accreditation Reference Handbook*.

11. A List of the Evidence Available in the Team Room

Evidence available to the visiting team should include primary sources and reports on which the Self Study Report is based. When evidence is cited in the Report, it should be indexed by standard for easy reference by team members. The *Guide to Evaluating Institutions* contains many suggestions regarding evidence. The visiting evaluation team will rely heavily on the evidence provided to it in the Team Room and elsewhere.

Tips for Preparation of the Self Study Report

Following are some suggestions for conducting the self study and preparing the Self Study Report.

About Participation

The Commission's emphasis on inclusive institutional dialogue as a continuous process sets the tone for participation in self study and the development of a self study report. Basically, the college is expected to provide evidence of broad participation and a commitment to making a concerted effort to providing the opportunity for all voices to be heard in the self study effort.

The Steering Committee

This committee should assume responsibility for overall planning and supervision of the self study report. The membership of the committee can be drawn from existing committee structures of the college currently being used as a means for conducing institutional dialogue. The committee should be given time to assume this responsibility and the clerical support needed to complete its work. The committee should have easy access to evidence and research.

Writing and Editing the Self Study Report

Given the structure and integrated nature of the Commission Standards and the themes, there are several ways that institutions could configure the work of their committees. One way would be to organize committees utilizing the themes. The six committees would write to the sub-standards that fit an assigned theme. Membership should include individuals from all constituencies of the college. This arrangement would make holistic weaving of themes and standards part of the process of writing the Self Study Report and would yield a product that addresses both the structure of the standards and the manner in which they are integrated.

Another way to organize would be to create four committees, one for each standard. In this model, subcommittees would address the standards, using the themes as the over-arching structure. Once again, the weaving of standards and themes would provide a holistic approach to think and writing about the institution, producing a Self Study Report that uses the integrated standards and themes as its underpinnings.

Whatever model the institution chooses to employ, sharing information across committees is very important and serves to diminish the likelihood of a Self Study Report that is lacking integration and coherency. Circulating drafts among all constituencies of the college through use of technology is a way to encourage multiple voices as well as greater integration of information and evidence.

It is advantageous to select an editor for the Self Study Report early so that he/she can participate throughout process.

Submission of the Self Study Report

After certification by college constituencies and review by the governing board, four copies of the Self Study Report, four catalogs, and four class schedules should be sent to the Accrediting Commission office. The Commission also requires one electronic version of the Self Study Report. A copy of the report, a catalog, and a schedule should be sent to each member of the evaluation team. Distribution of the report should occur at least six weeks prior to the scheduled evaluation visit. Copies of the report should be made available to members of the college community and to the governing board.

The Evaluation Site Visit

Organization for the Visit

Preparations for the evaluation team's visit should focus on facilitating the team's work. The Accreditation Liaison Officer, or designee, assumes responsibility for the logistical aspects of the team's visit by arranging lodging and meals, local transportation for team members, clerical and computer assistance, and identification of a central headquarters, or "team room." Sometime prior to the team visit, the evaluation team chairperson will communicate with the person in charge of logistical arrangements to confirm details.

Since the time allotted for a team visit is very short, the institution must be careful not to plan activities that will use up the limited time. The institution may host a simple activity on campus to introduce the team to members of the board, college staff, students, or others directly involved in the self study process, but the Commission discourages more elaborate social activity. The college community should be given advanced notice about the timing, nature, and purpose of the team visit and urged to provide support for the team members.

The actual visit occurs while the college is in session, usually during the middle of the week. Since the visitation date is set many months prior to the visit, key campus personnel should arrange to be on campus and available to meet with team members. These persons include the college CEO, administrators, department heads or coordinators, persons who had substantial responsibility for the self study, representatives of the Academic Senate, and employee collective bargaining units (if applicable). Open meetings for members of the college community who wish to talk to the team are typically scheduled. Governing board members are also expected to be available for meeting with the team. If there is a board meeting during the visit, team members often attend.

The evaluation team requires a well organized team room located in a central place affording privacy for confidential discussions and convenience for the team and college staff. The room should contain all of the studies and supporting documents relevant to the self study and self study report, indexed to the sections of the Self Study Report. A staff person should be available nearby to locate any additional documents, set up appointments, receive messages, and to assist the team. The team room should be equipped with computers, printers, and an ample supply of formatted diskettes.

Format of the Visit

The flow of the evaluation visit will be managed by the team chair and will reflect the nature of the self study and the needs of the institution. Generally, there will be an introduction of the team members to key staff members, time for team members to meet with individuals and small groups, time for classroom or program visits, time for team meetings and writing, and time for a report to the college staff. If the institution has off-campus program sites, team members may need to schedule time to visit them. If the institution employs distance learning or electronically mediated learning opportunities for students, team members will ask for access to this delivery mode.

The final evaluation visit activity is the meeting of the team chair with the CEO and with members of the college to share brief observations, comments, and major findings based on the team's evaluation. The team's recommendation to the Accrediting Commission regarding the status of the college is not disclosed at this time.

Post Evaluation Visit Activities

Approximately two weeks after the visit, a draft of the team report is sent to the CEO for correction of factual errors. After the report has been reviewed by team members and submitted by the team chair to the Accrediting Commission office, a copy of the final report is sent to the CEO prior to the Commission meeting at which action is to be taken. Thus, the institution will be made aware of the team's recommendations on the standards before the final report is received from the Commission.

The evaluation team's confidential recommendation to the Commission regarding the accredited status of the institution is not revealed in the team report.

Appendix A: Sample Certification

Certification of the Institutional Self Study Report

(To be Inserted in the Report following the Cover Sheet)

Date _____

To: Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges,
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

From: _____
Name of Institution

_____
Address

_____

This Institutional Self Study Report is submitted for the purpose of assisting in the determination of the institution's accreditation status.

We certify that there was broad participation by the campus community, and we believe the Self Study Report accurately reflects the nature and substance of this institution.

Signed _____

Name Chief Executive Officer

_____

Name Chairperson, Governing Board

_____

Name Title Representing

_____

Name Title Representing

_____

Name Title Representing

Appendix B: Sample Cover Sheet

College _____
(Name of Institution)

Institutional Self Study Report in Support of Reaffirmation of Accreditation
or in Support of an Application for Candidacy
or in Support of an Application for Accreditation

(Notation of Reason for Self Study)

Submitted by

_____
(Name of Institution)

_____
(Address of Institution)

_____
(Address of Institution)

to
Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges

(Date Submitted)

Appendix C: Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation

Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior colleges
Western Association of Schools and Colleges
(Adopted June, 1995; Revised January 1996; Adopted January, 2004)

In order to apply for eligibility, the institution must completely meet all Eligibility Requirements. Compliance with the criteria is expected to be continuous and will be validated periodically, normally as part of every institutional self study and comprehensive evaluation.

Institutions that have achieved accreditation are expected to include in their self study reports information demonstrating that they continue to meet the eligibility requirements.

1. Authority

The institution is authorized or licensed to operate as an educational institution and to award degrees by an appropriate governmental organization or agency as required by each of the jurisdictions or regions in which it operates.

Private institutions, if required by the appropriate statutory regulatory body, must submit evidence of authorization, licensure, or approval by that body. If incorporated, the institution shall submit a copy of its articles of incorporation.

Documentation

- Degree-granting approval statement, authorization to operate, or certificates from appropriate bodies.
- Articles of incorporation (private institutions).

2. Mission

The institution's educational mission is clearly defined, adopted, and published by its governing board consistent with its legal authorization, and is appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education and the constituency it seeks to serve. The mission statement defines institutional commitment to achieving student learning.

Documentation

- Copy of the mission statement as it appears in a published catalog or other public document.
- Minutes of governing board meeting where mission statement was adopted.
- Include any recent revisions.

3. Governing Board

The institution has a functioning governing board responsible for the quality, integrity, and financial stability of the institution and for ensuring that the institution's mission is being carried out. This board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. Its membership is sufficient in size and composition to fulfill all board responsibilities.

The governing board is an independent policy-making body capable of reflecting constituent and public interest in board activities and decisions. A majority of the board members has no employment, family, ownership, or other personal financial interest in the institution. The board adheres to a conflict of interest policy that assures that those interests are disclosed and that they do not interfere with the impartiality of governing body members or outweigh the greater duty to secure and ensure the academic and fiscal integrity of the institution.

Documentation

- Biographical information on governing board members.
- Copy of governing board bylaws.
- Copy of conflict of interest policy.
- Certification of no board majority of persons with employment, family, ownership or personal interest in the institution signed by chief executive officer and governing board chair (private institutions).

4. Chief Executive Officer

The institution must have a chief executive officer appointed by the governing board, whose full-time responsibility is to the institution, and who possesses the requisite authority to administer board policies. Neither the district/system chief administrator nor the college chief administrator may serve as the chair of the governing board.

Documentation

- Name, address, and biographical information about chief executive officer.
- Certification of CEO's full-time responsibility to the institution signed by chief executive officer and governing board.

5. Administrative Capacity

The institution has sufficient staff, with appropriate preparation and experience to provide the administrative services necessary to support its mission and purpose.

Documentation

- Table of organization, including names of those in the positions.
- Names and biographical information about administrative staff.

6. Operational Status

The institution is operational, with students actively pursuing its degree programs.

Documentation

- Enrollment history of institution (most recent three yearssuggested).
- Enrollments in institutional degree programs by year or cohort, including degrees awarded.
- Current schedule of classes.

7. Degrees

A substantial portion of the institution's educational offerings are programs that lead to degrees, and a significant proportion of its students are enrolled in them.

Documentation

- List of degrees, course credit requirements, and length of study for each degree program.
- General education courses and requirements for each degree offered.
- Catalog designation of college level courses for which degree credit is granted.
- Data describing student enrollment in each degree program and student enrollment in the institution's non-degree programs.

8. Educational Programs

The institution's principal degree programs are congruent with its mission, are based on recognized higher education field(s) of study, are of sufficient content and length, are conducted at levels of quality and rigor appropriate to the degrees offered, and culminate in identified student outcomes. At least one degree program must be of two academic years in length.

Documentation

- Names of programs which reflect the mission of institution, including documentation of at least one degree program of two academic years in length.
- Documentation from catalog or other public document which describes courses and curricular sequence of educational programs.
- Documentation of location(s) of educational programs, including a list of those offered electronically.

9. Academic Credit

The institution awards academic credits based on generally accepted practices in degree-granting institutions of higher education. Public institutions governed by statutory or system regulatory requirements provide appropriate information about the awarding of academic credit.

Documentation

- Institutional policies on transfer and award of credit (See Commission *Policy on Transfer Credit*).
- Catalog documentation of credits awarded.
- Formula used by the institution to calculate values of units of academic credit, especially for laboratory, clinical, or other learning configurations.

10. Student Learning Achievement

The institution defines and publishes for each program the program's expected student learning and achievement outcomes. Through regular and systematic assessment, it demonstrates that students who complete programs, no matter where or how they are offered, achieve these outcomes.

Documentation

- Catalog statements which establish student learning outcomes for programs.
- Student learning outcome data from educational program reviews.
- Graduation, transfer, job placement, licensure examination pass rate history, as appropriate to the institutional mission.

11. General Education

The institution defines and incorporates into all of its degree programs a substantial component of general education designed to ensure breadth of knowledge and promote intellectual inquiry. The general education component includes demonstrated competence in writing and computational skills and an introduction to some of the major areas of knowledge.

General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it. Degree credit for general education programs must be consistent with levels of quality and rigor appropriate to higher education. See Accreditation Standards, II.A.3, for areas of study for general education.

Documentation

- List of general education courses currently offered, including catalog descriptions.
- Course outlines for language and quantitative reasoning courses.
- Evidence that general education courses are of higher education rigor and quality.

12. Academic Freedom

The institution's faculty and students are free to examine and test all knowledge appropriate to their discipline or area of major study as judged by the academic/educational community in general. Regardless of institutional affiliation or sponsorship, the institution maintains an atmosphere in which intellectual freedom and independence exist.

Documentation

- Board approved policy on academic freedom.

13. Faculty

The institution has a substantial core of qualified faculty with full-time responsibility to the institution. The core is sufficient in size and experience to support all of the institution's educational programs. A clear statement of faculty responsibilities must include development and review of curriculum as well as assessment of learning.

Documentation

- Full-time and part-time faculty roster, including degrees and experience (note that faculty degrees must be from US accredited institutions or the equivalent).
- Faculty responsibilities statement or contract outlining faculty responsibilities.
- Current schedule of classes identifying faculty responsible for each class.

14. Student Services

The institution provides for all of its students appropriate student services that support student learning and development within the context of the institutional mission.

Documentation

- Demographic characteristics of students.
- Evidence that the institution assesses student needs for services and provides for them.
- List of student services provided which reflects the mission of the institution.
- Description of programs for special student populations.

15. Admissions

The institution has adopted and adheres to admission policies consistent with its mission that specify the qualifications of students appropriate for its programs.

Documentation

- Copy of admissions policy from the college catalog or other published statement.
- Copy of enrollment application.
- Statement of student qualifications for admission.
- Statement of roles and expectations of admissions personnel.

16. Information and Learning Resources

The institution provides, through ownership or contractual agreement, specific long-term access to sufficient information and learning resources and services to support its mission and instructional programs in whatever format and wherever they are offered.

Documentation

- Profile of holdings and resources, including electronic resources.
- Copies of agreements for access to external resources.

17. Financial Resources

The institution documents a funding base, financial resources, and plans for financial development adequate to support student learning programs and services, to improve institutional effectiveness, and to assure financial stability.

Documentation

- Past, current, and proposed budgets and financial statements.
- Documentation of any external foundation or other funding support.
- Documentation of funding base.

18. Financial Accountability

The institution annually undergoes and makes available an external financial audit by a certified public accountant or an audit by an appropriate public agency. The institution shall submit with its eligibility application a copy of the budget and institutional financial audits and management letters prepared by an outside certified public accountant or by an appropriate public agency, who has no other relationship to the institution, for its two most recent fiscal years, including the fiscal year ending immediately prior to the date of the submission of the application. The audits must be certified and any exceptions explained. It is recommended that the auditor employ as a guide, *Audits of Colleges and Universities*, published by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. An applicant institution must not show an annual or cumulative operating deficit at any time during the eligibility application process.

Documentation

- Past, current, and proposed budgets.
- Certified independent audits, including management letters.
- Financial aid program review/audits, if the institution is a participant.
- Student loan default rates and relevant USDOE reports, if the institution is a participant.

19. Institutional Planning and Evaluation

The institution systematically evaluates and makes public how well and in what ways it is accomplishing its purposes, including assessment of student learning outcomes. The institution provides evidence of planning for improvement of institutional structures and processes, student achievement of educational goals, and student learning. The institution assesses progress toward achieving its stated goals and makes decisions regarding improvement through an ongoing and systematic cycle of evaluation, integrated planning, resource allocation, implementation, and re-evaluation.

Documentation

- Written, current institutional plans that describe ways in which the institution will achieve its educational goals.
- Evidence of how the results of institutional plans are used to guide resource planning and allocation, facilities plans, and other significant institutional planning efforts and decision making processes.
- Evidence that the institution engages in regular, self-reflective evaluation of its operations and of student learning outcomes, and uses the results of this evaluation to identify strengths and areas in need of improvement for purposes of developing institutional plans.
- Evidence that well-defined decision-making processes and authority serve to facilitate planning and institutional effectiveness.

20. Public Information

The institution provides a catalog for its constituencies with precise, accurate, and current information concerning the following:

General Information

- Official Name, Address(es), Telephone Number(s), and Web Site Address of the Institution
- Educational Mission
- Course, Program, and Degree Offerings
- Academic Calendar and Program Length

- Academic Freedom Statement
- Available Student Financial Aid
- Available Learning Resources
- Names and Degrees of Administrators and Faculty
- Names of Governing Board Members

Requirements

- Admissions
- Student Fees and Other Financial Obligations
- Degree, Certificates, Graduation and Transfer

Major Policies Affecting Students

- Academic Regulations, including Academic Honesty
- Nondiscrimination
- Acceptance of Transfer Credits
- Grievance and Complaint Procedures
- Sexual Harassment
- Refund of Fees

Locations or Publications Where Other Policies may be Found

Documentation

- Catalog or other public document which serves that purpose.
- Recent print or other media advertisements.
- Policies regarding public disclosure.

21. Relations with the Accrediting Commission

The institution must provide assurance that it adheres to the eligibility requirements and accreditation standards and policies of the Commission, describes itself in identical terms to all its accrediting agencies, communicates any changes in its accredited status, and agrees to disclose information required by the Commission to carry out its accrediting responsibilities. The institution must comply with Commission requests, directives, decisions and policies, and must make complete, accurate, and honest disclosure. Failure to do so is sufficient reason, in and of itself, for the Commission to impose a sanction, or to deny or revoke candidacy or accreditation.

Documentation

- Copy of the policy adopted and published by governing board assuring compliance with this criterion.
- List of other accreditations held by institution and information regarding standing with those organizations.
- Copy of directory pages or website which describe the institution's representation by those accrediting bodies.

Appendix D: Policies Referenced in the Standards

Policy on Distance Learning, Including Electronically-Mediated Learning

Principles of Good Practice in Overseas International Education Programs for Non-U.S. Nationals

Policy on Closing an Institution

Policy on Transfer of Credit

Policy on Award of Credit (Adopted by the Commission June 2004)

Contractual Relationships with Non-Regionally Accredited Organizations

Policy and Procedures for the Evaluation of Institutions in Multi-College/Multi-Unit Districts or Systems