

University of Nevada Reno

**Overview of the Accreditation
Process**

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What is Accreditation?

**Accreditation is the oldest and best
known seal of higher education
quality. Its four roles include**

- 1. Sustain/enhance quality**
- 2. Maintain academic value in H.E.**
- 3. Prevent politicizing H.E.**
- 4. Serve the public interest**

Accreditation Expectations

The accreditation process requires institutions to examine their own goals, operations and achievements. It provides for expert evaluation by a visiting evaluation committee and works with the institution in receiving the recommendations of the accrediting body, the NWCCU.

Accreditation Outcomes

Academic Quality is Enhanced

Achievements are Documented

Accountability is Demonstrated

Improvement Is Made Based on Assessment and Evaluation

Regional Accreditation

Regional accrediting agencies are recognized by the US DOE and CHEA and accredit institutions within a prescribed geographic region.

Regional accreditors accredit entire institutions, not individual programs or subject content areas.

Assurances

The process seeks to reaffirm that institutions-

Have clearly defined and appropriate educational objectives;

Have conditions under which objectives can reasonably be achieved;

Are substantially accomplishing their objectives; and

Are reasonably organized, staffed, and supported to continue to do so.

Benefits

Federal Student Financial Aid

**Federal Funds for Specified Programs
and Services**

Federal Funds for Research

Federal Funds for Capital Construction

Quality Assurance and Integrity

Academic Transferability

Commissioners

**Baccalaureate/Post-Baccalaureate
Degree Granting Institutions (10)**

**Associate/Pre-Baccalaureate
Degree Granting Institutions (8)**

General Public (4)

Adjoining Region (2)

Chair (1)

Executive Director (ex-officio) (1)

Evaluating Quality

Quality cannot always be defined in the same terms for all institutions.

Therefore, an evaluation determines:

- 1) how well the institution's mission and goals are being achieved; and**
- 2) how consistent the M/G's are with Commission's criteria for accreditation.**

Evaluation Criteria

Conditions and principles, agreed upon by member institutions, that characterize educational quality and effectiveness. They are qualitative statements that with evidence, peers may evaluate. Criteria include:

Eligibility Requirements - characteristics and conditions for initial and ongoing accreditation.

Standards – primary criteria by which quality, candidacy, and accreditation are evaluated.

Related Policies – provide additional clarification of the Standards.

Taxonomy of a Standard

Standard

Standard Number and Title

Example

**Standard Two - Educational Program
and Its Effectiveness**

Standard Element

**Standard Element Number and Title
(Conceptual Framework)**

Example

**Standard 2.B - Educational Program
Planning and Assessment**

Element Narrative

Standard Element Narrative (Philosophy)

Example

Educational program planning is based on regular and continuous assessment of programs in light of the needs of the disciplines, the fields, or occupations for which programs prepare students, and other constituencies of the institution.

Standard Indicator

Standard Indicator & Declarative Statement (Quality Measures)

Example

2.B.3 The institution provides evidence that its assessment activities lead to the improvement of teaching and learning.

Standards

- One Institutional Mission and Goals, Planning and Effectiveness**
- Two Educational Program & Its Effectiveness**
- Three Students**
- Four Faculty**
- Five Library and Information Resources**
- Six Governance and Administration**
- Seven Finance**
- Eight Physical Resources**
- Nine Institutional Integrity**

Noteworthy Themes

Standards Are Interrelated.

Repetition among the Standards and Policies emphasizes the interconnected nature of the institution.

Assessment, Evaluation, Measurement, or Judgment of Quality and Effectiveness are explicitly referenced in each standard.

Key Considerations

Institutional Planning and Effectiveness

(Standard Element 1.B)

Educational Program Planning and Assessment

(Standard Element 2.B, Policy 2.2)

General Education/Related Instruction

(Policy 2.1)

Distance Education

(Policy 2.6)

Faculty Evaluation

(Policy 4.1)

Governance System, Board, and Administration

(Standard Elements 6.A, 6.B, 6.C)

Financial Planning, Adequacy, and Management

(Standard Elements 7.A, 7.B, 7.C)

Contractual Agreements with External Organizations

(Policy A-6)

Planning and Effectiveness

Each accredited and candidate institution is expected to engage in ongoing planning to achieve its mission and goals, evaluate how well, and in what ways, it is accomplishing its mission and goals, and demonstrate that it uses the results for broad-based, continuous planning and evaluation.

Educational Assessment

Expected learning outcomes are identified and published for each degree and certificate program. Regular and systematic assessment documents that students have achieved these outcomes.

Educational assessment processes are clearly defined, encompass all offerings, conducted regularly, and integrated into overall planning and evaluation.

General Education

Baccalaureate and transfer associate degree programs must include a substantial core of collegiate level General Education with identifiable outcomes & required competence in:

- **Written and oral communication;**
- **Quantitative reasoning;**
- **Critical analysis and logical thinking; and**
- **Literacy in the discourse or technology appropriate to the program of study.**

These expected outcomes should be stated in relation to the institution's mission and goals.

Related Instruction

Programs of study for applied or specialized associate degrees or for certificate programs of 45 (q) / 30 (s) credits or more in length require a recognizable *body of instruction* in program-related areas of:

- **Communication**
- **Computation**
- **Human Relations**
- **Additional topics as appropriate**

Policy 2.1

Related Instruction

Related instruction content may be embedded within the program curriculum or taught in blocks of specialized instruction and should be taught by faculty who are clearly and appropriately qualified. Regardless of approach, related instruction content must be clearly identified and pertinent to the program of study.

Policy 2.1

Distance Education

This policy is intended to apply to the broadest possible definition of distance delivery of instruction.

Degree programs and credit courses may or may not be delivered exclusively via telecommunications.

Faculty Evaluation

Institutions are expected to conduct some form of substantive performance evaluation of all faculty members at least once within each five-years of service. The evaluation should be collegial, participatory, and use multiple indices of assessment.

Institutional Collaboration

An accredited or candidate institution may not lend the prestige or authority of its accreditation to authenticate courses or programs offered under contract with other organizations unless it demonstrates oversight and responsibility for those offerings in compliance with Commission standards, principles, and practices.

NWCCU Standards & Policies . . .

Do not say how an institution must plan and evaluate.

Do not say institutions must practice a particular system.

Do not say quantitative is preferable to qualitative

DO say that qualitative and quantitative must complement each other.

Do not say an Institutional Researcher is required

Do say ongoing outcome assessment must be continuous and must be an integral part of institutional planning.

Do not define "adequate", "appropriate", or "sufficient" since they are dictated by institutional mission and goals.

Compass Check

Mapping Direction

If you don't know where you're going, any road will do.

White Rabbit in 'Alice in Wonderland'
Lewis Carroll and George Harrison

Destinations

**If headed in the wrong direction,
going faster isn't better.**

Setting the Bar

**What are your institution's
expectations of itself?**

Institutional Expectation

**Our Expectation Is to
Effectively Fulfill
Our Mission**

Self-Study Goals

Understand, assess, analyze, evaluate, and improve planning and effectiveness of the institution in fulfilling its mission—not merely defending what already exists;

Identify educational outcomes and document student achievement of educational outcomes;

Document that Commission Eligibility Requirements, Standards, and Policies are met;

Accurately, candidly, directly identify strengths, weaknesses, and achievements of institutional activities, structures, and processes.

Quality and Accountability

Does your institution fulfill its mission?

Are institutional goals achieved?

Are intended outcomes realized?

Is institutional integrity maintained?

Does your institution continuously improve?

How do you know?

What is your evidence?

Key Questions

Who are we? (Values)

What do we claim to do? (Mission)

Are we doing it? (Integrity)

How well are we doing it? (Effectiveness)

How do we know? (Evaluation)

What data do we collect? (Evidence)

What do the data tell us? (Analysis)

What are we doing as a result? (Planning)

Model Self-Study Characteristics

Design is appropriate to the institution

**Process is inclusive and internally motivated
with leaders committed to the process**

**Self-study is a critical review of mission, goals,
and practices and assesses and evaluates
effectiveness in achieving its mission & goals**

**Report is data driven, analytical, with minimal
description**

**Self study outcomes are incorporated in
planning to improve institutional effectiveness**

Role of the Steering Committee

Motivate, encourage and support participants

Design the study and translate it into clearly defined structures, roles and tasks

Deliver a clear charge for the tasks and assign individuals/groups to the tasks

Set a realistic schedule and allocate resources needed to complete the tasks

Establish clear channels of communication

Coordinate collection & synthesis of data

Conducting the Self Study

Identify institutional outcomes

Identify criteria that measure intended institutional/program outcomes

Collect data based upon the criteria

Assess, analyze, and evaluate the data

Indicate how results are used in planning

Develop and implement change strategies

Ockham's Razor

The Law of Parsimony

The Simplest, Most Direct Approach Is Usually the Best and the Most Efficient

Writing the Report

Be concise! (200 pages +/- plus appendices)

Editing Carefully

Be candid, forthright and succinct

Flow should be smooth and logical

Avoid jargon

Be brief on narration and description

Rely on data and analysis to support claims

"Speak" in a common voice

Proof final copy for errors and omissions

Provide an Executive Summary

The Self-Study Report

Scholarly, analytical document
Accurately reports the results of self-study
Authentic reflection of the institution
Readable and useful!
Organized around Standards and *Guide for Self Study* (suggested)
Candidly assesses outcomes
Analyzes assessment data
Identifies areas for improvement
Specifies plans to achieve improvement

Structure and Contents

Preface

Brief description of the self-study process
Scope of inclusion in the self-study
Institutional goals of self-study
Compliance with Eligibility Requirements

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Succinct, comprehensive snapshot

Provides institutional context

Major changes since last evaluation

Summary of major findings

Implications

Plans for improvement

Chapter Structure and Contents

Standards Chapters

Organized around the standards

Do not duplicate support documents

Data-based description (just enough!)

Data-based analysis

Data-based evaluation

Conclusions

Plans for improvement

Chapter summary

Summary Chapter

Summary

**Institution-wide synthesis across all
Standards**

Major findings for the institution

Conclusions

Plans for institutional improvement

Supporting Documentation

Required Documentation

Included in body of the report

Included in the appendices

Accompanying the report

Required Exhibits

Summarized in the self-study

Included in the appendices

Available in the committee room

Suggested Material

Suggested items for self-study

Made available in the committee room

Typical Weaknesses

Incongruent mission, goals, & activities

Lack of assessment, analysis, and evaluation

No consequences from the self-study

Little, if any, use of data to document claims

Data not clearly tied to planning, outcomes assessment, or institutional effectiveness

Unsupported statements of apparent fact

Lack of synthesis of issues across Standards

Preparing for the Visit

Identify an institutional liaison for each member of the visiting committee.

Publish Third Party Comment Announcement.

At least 30 days prior to the visit, mail required documents to the Commission office and each Committee member.

Organize exhibits in the Committee room.

Gather computers and support resources in the Committee room.

The Visiting Committee

Represents the Commission

Composed of Peers

Out of state

Similar educational environment

Completed evaluator training

Designated areas of responsibility

Chaired by Commissioner/Seasoned Evaluator

Validates the self-study

Evaluates the institution

Reports findings

Submits confidential recommendation

Anatomy of the Visit

Pre-Visit Meeting

Committee Organizational Meeting

Day 1

Introductory Meeting

Evaluation Activities

Committee Meeting

Day 2

Evaluation Activities

Committee Meeting

Day 3

Final Committee Meeting

Chair Meeting with President

Exit Meeting

Following the Visit

Institution responds to the Evaluation Committee's report to correct errors of fact.

Institution is invited to address the Commission at its next scheduled meeting.

Commission renders a decision based upon:

**Institutional self study;
Evaluation Committee's report;
Response from the institution;
Testimony from Evaluation Committee Chair;
Presentation by the President; and
Evaluation Committee's recommendation.**

Commission Actions

Reaffirm Accreditation

Defer Action

Issue or Continue Warning

Impose or Continue Probation

Issue or Continue Show-Cause Order

Terminate Accreditation

Contact Information

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Questions?