



NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

209 Burlington Road, Bedford, MA 01730
Voice: (781) 271-0022 Fax: (781) 271-0950 Web: <http://www.neasc.org>

PROCEDURES FOR FIFTH-YEAR REPORTS

Between comprehensive evaluations, the Commission requires that member institutions complete an interim report which is typically at the fifth year of a ten-year review cycle. The following procedures provide assistance to institutions with the process of completing fifth-year reports.

Fifth-year reports require institutions to reflect upon progress made since the last comprehensive review and to project areas of focus for the next five years leading up to the next comprehensive review. The fifth-year report process serves as a vehicle for stimulating improvements within the institution, and for supporting the Commission in its role of assuring the public of the quality of the institution and higher education as an enterprise. The Commission's Policy on the Periodic Review of Accredited Institutions (attached) provides the expectations for periodic reviews:

“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 procedures below provide an outline of what is expected for the process of developing and completing the fifth-year report.

Procedures

- I. Reminder to the Institution: Approximately a year in advance of the Commission's consideration of the fifth-year report, the institution is reminded of the requirement and provided a copy of these procedures, the Policy on the Periodic Review of Accredited Institutions, and a copy of the *Standards for Accreditation* along with directions for locating them on our web site.
- II. Orientation: In the semester one year before the fifth-year report, the Commission staff will offer an orientation session for institutions completing a report.
- III. Staff Visit: In addition, at the institution's request, a member of the Commission's staff will visit the institution, meeting with those responsible for the preparation of the report, to discuss its preparation in light of Commission expectations. The Commission encourages scheduling a staff visit to discuss ways of implementing of the new *Standards*.

- IV. Review of Electronically Offered Degree Programs, Off-campus Programming, and Contractual Relationships. Institutions that have electronically offered degree programs (in which students can complete 50% or more of the courses on-line) and off-campus programming (branch campuses or other instructional locations where students can complete 50% or more of their degree, or contractual relationships involving courses and programs) must specifically address these programs at appropriate points within their presentation of the institution as a whole. Institutions that offer such programs and those contemplating offering a higher degree but that have not yet completed the “substantive change” process to include these elements in the institution’s accreditation should contact the Commission offices.
- V. Preparation of the Report: Institutions are encouraged to use this occasion as an opportunity to undertake an assessment of their educational planning and effectiveness both for their own purposes and in reference to their fulfillment of the Commission’s *Standards*. Where on-going systems of self-evaluation exist, institutions should utilize the results of those efforts in the preparation of their reports. The fifth-year report should be no longer than 50 pages, not including Enrollment and Fiscal Data forms.

The Commission asks that the following guidelines be used for the format and content of the report.

1. Cover Page. The cover page includes the name and location of the institution, the date of the report’s submission, and a notation that this is a fifth-year report.
2. Statement on Report Preparation. The institution should describe briefly the process by which the report was prepared and indicate the names of those involved in its preparation.
3. Institutional Overview. This section should provide an overview of the institution, including its purpose, setting, and any special circumstances that would help the reader understand its nature and scope.
4. Response to Areas Identified for Special Emphasis. Frequently, in its actions specifying fifth-year interim reports, the Commission identifies areas which should be given particular emphasis in the report. Institutions in preparing their report should give special consideration to these matters, providing sufficient information so that the Commission will be adequately apprised of the current state of development in the areas indicated. Please make reference to the *Standards* in addressing each of these areas of special emphasis.
5. Narrative. The narrative section gives the institution the opportunity to conduct a mid-course review and discuss how and how well it meets each of the *Standards*. The Commission encourages institutions to address the Standards in terms of progress made since the last comprehensive review, projected areas of focus for the next five years leading up to the next comprehensive review including identification of high priority issues and initiatives for particular emphasis due to their relevance to the institution at this point in time. The narrative consists of description, appraisal, projection and statements regarding institutional effectiveness in relation to each standard. The description need not repeat that which was provided in the institution’s last self-study or other reports provided to the Commission since the last comprehensive evaluation.

Information included in the ‘Response to Areas Identified for Special Emphasis’

(described above) need not be repeated in this narrative other than to make reference at appropriate points that they were addressed in the previous section.

6. Plans. The report concludes with a summary of what the institution anticipates as its most significant issues and initiatives for the next five years.
 7. Enrollment, Fiscal Data, Public Disclosure, and Indicators of Student Success. The institution should append this information to the report. The appropriate forms for your institution will be emailed to the institution's Accreditation Liaison Officer two semesters before the report is due.

Enrollment and fiscal data cover the years since the last comprehensive visit and provide summary projections for enrollment and financial development for the next five years. There are separate forms for independent and public universities. Independent institutions should complete forms 1 through 7, and forms 8-5, 9-1, and 9-2 as well as the Summaries, Ratios and Graphs. Public institutions should complete the general information form, forms 1 through 6, form 8, and the last table of form 7.

Public Disclosure and Student Success. Separate forms for these two areas have also been developed and should be included with the interim report. In this case, public and independent institutions use the same forms.
- VI. Submitting the Report. The institution should send four copies of the report and four institutional catalogs as well as an electronic copy via email or hard storage to the office of the Commission by the required date of submission. After reviewing the report, the Commission will notify the institution of its action.
- VII. Commission Action: Interim reports are considered by the Commission at one of its regular meetings. Following its review, the Commission may take one of the following actions:
1. to accept the report and confirm the established date for the next comprehensive evaluation in five years;
 2. to accept the report but also request further information on specific issues. The submission of such information may be followed by an on-site evaluation;
 3. to accept the report but require that a follow-up visit be undertaken by a small team of evaluators;
 4. to reject the report and request that a new one be prepared and submitted within a specified period of time. Such reports may be followed by an on-site evaluation;
 5. to receive the report and require that a self-study be undertaken at the earliest possible date, to be followed by an on-site evaluation;
 6. in extreme cases, to require that the institution show cause why it should not be placed on probation or its accreditation should not be terminated.

Attachment

August, 1997
October, 2003
February, 2004
January, 2005
August, 2007



**NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

209 Burlington Road, Bedford, MA 01730

Voice: (781) 271-0022 Fax: (781) 271-0950 Web: <http://www.neasc.org>

**POLICY ON THE
PERIODIC REVIEW OF ACCREDITED INSTITUTIONS**

Accreditation is viewed by the Commission on Institutions 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 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 during 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, contractual relationships, 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 a substantive change or if at any time its educational effectiveness 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*