



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

209 Burlington Road, Suite 201, Bedford, MA 01730  
Voice: (781) 271-0022 Fax: (781) 271-0950 Web: <http://cihe.neasc.org>

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## **Procedures for Interim (Fifth-Year) Reports**

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

Interim reports require institutions to review how they continue to meet the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*, reflect upon progress made since the last comprehensive review, and project areas of focus for the next five years leading up to the next comprehensive review. The interim 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" provides the expectations for periodic review:

"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 interim report.

Beginning with reports due for consideration in Fall 2012, the Commission is piloting an *Educational Effectiveness Interim (Fifth-Year) Report* format which the Commission believes can help institutions focus the preparation of the interim report on areas of increasing importance in higher education. Institutions are encouraged to use the *Educational Effectiveness* format to prepare the interim report, unless specifically asked by the Commission to use the *Traditional Interim (Fifth-Year) Report* format. Expectations for each of these formats are outlined later in this Procedures statement.

### **Notification 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 the "Procedures for Interim (Fifth-Year) Reports" and the "Policy on the Periodic Review of

Accredited Institutions.” These documents may be found on the Commission website at <http://cihe.neasc.org>.

### **Orientation**

One year before the interim report is due Commission staff will offer an orientation session for institutions completing a report.

### **Staff Visit**

In addition, at the institution's request, a member of the Commission staff will visit the institution, meeting with those responsible for the preparation of the fifth-year interim report, in light of Commission expectations.

### **Review Programs offered through Distance Education, Correspondence Education, Off-campus Programming, and/or Contractual Relationships**

The interim report should address all of the institution's programs including:

- electronically offered degree programs (in which students can complete 50% or more of the credits through courses offered entirely on-line),
- programs offered through correspondence education (see eponymous Commission policy),
- off-campus programming (branch campuses or other instructional locations where students can complete 50% or more of their degree),
- international campuses that matriculate students into a degree program or offer credits to non-matriculated students, or
- contractual relationships involving courses and programs.

Institutions that offer such programs, or that have plans to do so, and those contemplating offering a higher or lower degree that have not yet completed the “substantive change” process to include these elements in the institution's accreditation, should contact the Commission offices.

### **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 for Accreditation*. Institutions should use the results for strengthening their ongoing system of self-evaluation.

Normally, the interim (fifth-year) report should be no longer than 50 pages, not including appendices and data forms.

### **Submission of the Report**

The institution should send an electronic (pdf) version of the entire report, four (4) paper copies, and four (4) institutional catalogs to the office of the Commission by the required date. The report should be single-spaced, printed on both sides of the paper, and neither stapled nor bound. After reviewing the report, the Commission will notify the institution of its action.

**FORMAT FOR THE  
EDUCATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS FIFTH-YEAR INTERIM REPORT**

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

1. Cover Page. Include the name and location of the institution, the date of the report's submission, and a notation that this is a fifth-year interim report.
2. Introduction. Describe briefly the process by which the report was prepared and indicate the names of those involved in its preparation.
3. Institutional Overview. 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. In its actions specifying fifth-year interim reports, the Commission frequently identifies areas that should be given particular emphasis. Institutions should discuss actions taken, and as appropriate a projection of what needs continued attention 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. Institutions that have been asked to address more than three or four areas of special emphasis in the interim report may find they need more than the normal 50-page limit for their report.
5. Standards Narrative. Institutions are asked to respond briefly to each of the Standards, in approximately 15 -20 pages: a) any significant changes since the comprehensive evaluation; b) how they continue to meet the Standard. The narrative is supplemented by information in the Interim Report Forms, which are organized by Standard. In developing their narrative, institutions are asked to comment on any noteworthy trends in the data included in the forms.
6. Assessment, Retention, Student Success. Institutions select one or a combination of three areas below, having to do with student achievement and success. This section of the report is a reflective essay, with supporting data, of approximately 15-20 pages. See the Note on Assessment, Retention, and Student Success (page 5). The three areas are:
  - a. What students gain as a result of their education: “Based on verifiable information, the institution understands what its students have gained as a result of their education and has useful evidence about the success of its recent graduates. This information is used for planning and resource allocation and to inform the public about the institution.” (*Planning and Evaluation*, 2.7)
  - b. Assessment of Student Learning: “what and how students are learning” (*The Academic Program*, 4.48 – 4.54)
  - c. Measures of Student Success, including Retention and Graduation (*Students*, 6.5 – 6.9)
7. Plans. Conclude with a summary of what the institution anticipates as its most significant issues and initiatives for the next five years, including those that may represent a substantive change. For further explanation on what constitutes a substantive change please review the *Policy on Substantive Change* found on the Commission website.

8. Appendix. Five items comprise the appendix. All forms and policies are available on the Commission website: <http://cihe.neasc.org>
- a. Affirmation of Compliance with Federal Regulations Relating to Title IV. A completed copy of this form, signed by the institution's chief executive officer, affirms the institution's compliance with key provisions of federal regulations.
  - b. Most recent audited financial statement.
  - c. The auditor's management letter. The management letter is any communication containing the auditor's specific recommendations to the institution on its financial controls and practices. Please indicate if no management letter was provided.
  - d. Interim Report Forms. These forms are a modified set of the Data First forms.
  - e. Student Achievement and Success Forms. The Student Achievement and Success forms consist of two parts:
    1. S Series. **All institutions complete the S series data forms** to report indicators of student success including retention and graduation rates along with post-graduation activities. Institutions should complete *all of the S forms that apply to their mission and programs*. Thus, all institutions will complete S1 and S2; most institutions will also have information to include on S3; and some institutions will also use S4.
    2. E Series. Institutions should complete the E series data forms to demonstrate progress/success with assessment (1) if assessment is an area of emphasis identified by the Commission for Section 4 of the report or (2) if 6b, above, is chosen.

## NOTE ON ASSESSMENT, RETENTION, AND STUDENT SUCCESS

The principal change in the *Educational Effectiveness* format for the fifth-year interim report is the section on Assessment, Retention, and Student Success. These areas are related but also distinct. The first, understanding what students gain as a result of their education (2.7), is new to the Standards with the 2011 revisions. The Commission believes that this focus will become increasingly important as institutions have better data to use and as the need to understand and be able to state what students have gained is increasingly important for planning and budgeting purposes and also for communication with the public about the value of attending a particular institution. The second area, assessment of student learning, as explicated by the Commission's Standards (4.48-4.54), focuses on understanding what and how students are learning, with the results being used for improvement of the academic program and services for students. The third area, measures of student success (6.5-6.9), focuses on quantitative measures, including retention and graduation rates for elements of the student population of particular interest to the institution (e.g., part-time students, first generation students, transfer students, students studying at an off-campus location).

In this format, institutions are asked to address in no more than 15-20 pages one or a combination of three areas of the Standards, below, concerning student achievement and success:

- a. What students gain as a result of their education: "Based on verifiable information, the institution understands what its students have gained as a result of their education and has useful evidence about the success of its recent graduates. This information is used for planning and resource allocation and to inform the public about the institution." (*Planning and Evaluation*, 2.7)
- b. Assessment of Student Learning: "what and how students are learning" (*The Academic Program*, 4.48 – 4.54)
- c. Measures of Student Success, including Retention and Graduation (*Students*, 6.5 – 6.9)

The area(s) selected for this section of the report should be central to the institution's success in fulfilling its mission. Also, the Commission realizes that the areas identified for attention and the approach taken by institutions will vary depending on the institution's mission, complexity, size, and capacity for inquiry.

A suggested format for this section is as follows:

- Description: What is the institution doing in the area(s) selected for discussion?
- Findings: What has the institution learned in the area(s) identified and how has it used or will it use the results for improvement of the academic program and services for students? How will the findings be used in internal and external communication? Include data and evidence, and as appropriate, refer to the E and S forms.
- Appraisal and Projection: What is the institution's own evaluation of its success in the selected area(s)? What plans does the institution have for further work in the area(s) selected or in any of the three areas above?

**FORMAT FOR THE  
TRADITIONAL FIFTH-YEAR INTERIM REPORT**

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

1. Cover Page. Include 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. Introduction. Describe briefly the process by which the report was prepared and indicate the names of those involved in its preparation.
3. Institutional Overview. 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. In its actions specifying fifth-year interim reports, the Commission frequently identifies areas that should be given particular emphasis. Institutions should discuss actions taken, and as appropriate a projection of what needs continued attention 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. Institutions that have been asked to address more than three or four areas of special emphasis in the interim report may find they need more than the normal 50-page limit for their report.
5. Standards 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 for Accreditation*. The Commission encourages institutions to address each Standard 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, statements regarding institutional effectiveness as well as references to the Interim Report Forms and Student Achievement and Success (E and S series) forms in relation to specific standards. The description component of the narrative need not repeat what was included 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" need not be repeated.
6. Plans. Conclude with a summary of what the institution anticipates as its most significant issues and initiatives for the next five years, including those that may represent a substantive change. For further explanation on what constitutes a substantive change please review the *Policy on Substantive Change* found on the Commission website.
7. Appendix. Five items comprise the appendix. All forms and policies are on the Commission website: <http://cihe.neasc.org>
  - a. Affirmation of Compliance with Federal Regulations Relating to Title IV. A completed copy of this form, signed by the institution's chief executive officer, affirms the institution's compliance with key provisions of federal regulations.
  - b. Most recent audited financial statement.
  - c. The auditor's management letter. The management letter is any communication containing the auditor's specific recommendations to the institution on its financial controls and practices. Please indicate if no management letter was provided.

- d. Interim Report Forms. These are a modified set of the Data First forms. They provide institutions with a logical starting place for the interim report so that the institution can proceed from data and evidence through Description, Appraisal, and Projection. Having key information in one place can provide the institution with a greater ability to use the text for analysis and reflection, not simply description, and can provide the Commission with quick access to summary information about the institution.
- e. Student Achievement and Success (E & S) Forms. The Student Achievement and Success forms consist of two parts:
- 1) The E Series addresses how the institution undertakes assessment of student learning and how it uses the findings. Institutions should *choose one or a combination* of forms so that each of their programs can be represented.
  - 2) The S Series reports on indicators of student success including retention and graduation rates along with post-graduation activities. Institutions should complete *all of the S forms that apply to their mission and programs*. Thus, all institutions will complete S1 and S2; most institutions will also have information to include on S3; and some institutions will also use S4.

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