



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

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**Policy Statement on  
Student Achievement and Success**

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In carrying out its accreditation responsibilities, the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education seeks to ensure that its decisions take into account the degree to which an affiliated institution assesses student achievement and student success and uses the results of its assessment to improve its offerings, matters explicitly addressed in the *Standards for Accreditation*. Part of the Commission's responsibility as a recognized reliable authority on the quality of education is to provide institutions with a report that addresses how well it meets the Standards for Accreditation, noting those areas where improvement is needed; a second function of the reports is to address "The institution's or program's performance with respect to student achievement." To this end, team chairs should ensure that the evaluation reports they prepare specifically address the extent to which an institution being evaluated fulfills the following criteria from the standards on *Planning and Evaluation, The Academic Program, Students, and Public Disclosure*.

**Planning and Evaluation**

- 2.4 The institution regularly and systematically evaluates the achievement of its mission and purposes, giving primary focus to the realization of its educational objectives. Its system of evaluation is designed to provide relevant and trustworthy information to support institutional improvement, with an emphasis on the academic program. The institution's evaluation efforts are effective for addressing its unique circumstances. These efforts use both quantitative and qualitative methods.
- 2.5 The institution has a system of periodic review of academic and other programs that includes the use of external perspectives.
- 2.6 Evaluation enables the institution to demonstrate through verifiable means its attainment of purposes and objectives both inside and outside the classroom. The results of evaluation are used systematically for improvement and to inform institutional planning, especially as it relates to student achievement and resource allocation.

**The Academic Program**

- 4.3 Each educational program demonstrates coherence through its goals, structure, and content; policies and procedures for admission and retention; instructional

methods and procedures; and the nature, quality, and extent of student learning and achievement. The institution offering multiple academic programs ensures that all programs meet or exceed the basic quality standards of the institution and that there is a reasonable consistency of quality among them. The institution provides sufficient resources to sustain and improve its academic program.

- 4.32 The evaluation of student learning or achievement and the award of credit are based upon clearly stated criteria that reflect learning objectives and are consistently and effectively applied. They are appropriate to the degree level at which they are applied.
- 4.32 Credit for prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning is awarded only at the undergraduate level with appropriate oversight by faculty and academic administration. When credit is awarded on the basis of prior experiential or non-collegiate sponsored learning alone, student learning and achievement are demonstrated to be at least comparable in breadth, depth, and quality to the results of institutionally provided learning experiences. The policies and procedures for the award of credit for prior or experiential learning are clearly stated and available to affected students.
- 4.44 The institution implements and supports a systematic and broad-based approach to the assessment of student learning focused on educational improvement through understanding what and how students are learning through their academic program and, as appropriate, through experiences outside the classroom. This approach is based on a clear statement or statements of what students are expected to gain, achieve, demonstrate, or know by the time they complete their academic program. The approach provides useful information to help the institution understand what and how students are learning, improve the experiences provided for students, and assure that the level of student achievement is appropriate for the degree awarded. Institutional support is provided for these activities.
- 4.45 The institution's approach to understanding student learning focuses on the course, program, and institutional level. Data and other evidence generated through this approach are considered at the appropriate level of focus, with the results being a demonstrable factor in improving the learning opportunities and results for students.
- 4.46 Expectations for student learning reflect both the mission and character of the institution and general expectations of the larger academic community for the level of degree awarded and the field of study. These expectations include statements that are consistent with the institution's mission in preparing students for further study and employment, as appropriate.
- 4.48 The institution's system of periodic review of academic programs includes a focus on understanding what and how students are learning as a result of the program.
- 4.49 The institution ensures that students have systematic, substantial, and sequential opportunities to learn important skills and understandings and actively engage in

important problems of their discipline or profession and that they are provided with regular and constructive feedback designed to help them improve their achievement.

### **Students**

- 6.4 The institution demonstrates its ability to admit students who can be successful in the institution's academic program, including specifically recruited populations. It ensures a systematic approach to providing accessible and effective programs and services designed to provide opportunities for enrolled students to be successful in achieving their academic goals. The institution provides students with information and guidance regarding opportunities and experiences that may help ensure their academic success.
- 6.6 The institution measures student success, including rates of retention and graduation and other measures of success appropriate to institutional mission. The institution's goals for retention and graduation reflect institutional purposes, and the results are used to inform recruitment and the review of programs and services. Rates of retention and graduation are separately determined for any group that the institution specifically recruits, and those rates are used in evaluating the success of specialized recruitment and the services and opportunities provided for the recruited students
- 6.16 Institutions with stated goals for students' co-curricular learning systematically assess their achievement.

### **Public Disclosure**

- 10.10 The institution publishes statements of its goals for students' education and the success of students in achieving those goals. Information on student success includes rates of retention and graduation and other measures of student success appropriate to institutional mission. As appropriate, recent information on passage rates for licensure examinations is also published
- 10.12 The institution has readily available valid documentation for any statements and promises regarding such matters as program excellence, learning outcomes, success in placement, and achievements of graduates or faculty.

Teams should also rely on the retention and graduation rates and other measures of student success that are included in the CIHE data forms at the end of the self-study.

In preparing evaluation reports and recommendations to the Commission, consequently, teams should not only evaluate the institution's current status but address the institution's need to expand or follow-up its assessment activities and its attainment with respect to student achievement and student success.

*November, 1998  
April, 2007*