

REFERENCE GUIDE

REGIONAL ACCREDITATION STANDARDS RELATED TO ADMISSION AND RECRUITMENT



National Association for
College Admission Counseling

Middle States Commission on Higher Education
New England Association of Schools and Colleges
Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
Higher Learning Commission
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
Western Association of Colleges and Schools
Senior College and University Commission

COMPILED MAY 2014



TABLE OF CONTENTS

MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION	4
<i>Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, as well as some international institutions</i>	
NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES COMMISSION ON INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION	14
<i>Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, as well as some international institutions</i>	
NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION	20
<i>Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, New Mexico, South Dakota, Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Wyoming</i>	
NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES	22
<i>Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington, as well as some international institutions</i>	
SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS COMMISSION ON COLLEGES	32
<i>Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Latin America</i>	
WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES SENIOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY COMMISSION	35
<i>California, Hawaii, and the Pacific Basin</i>	
SOURCES	40

INTRODUCTION

In order to be eligible to receive Title IV federal student aid, institutions in the United States must be accredited by an approved accreditation agency. In addition to opening the door to federal aid, accreditation helps institutions establish the quality of their educational programs in the public eye, facilitates transfer agreements with similarly accredited institutions, and, in some cases, qualifies an institution's graduates to sit for professional licensure exams.

It is widely acknowledged that the six regional accreditation agencies represent the “gold standard” among the available accreditation options. Thus, achieving accreditation through these agencies is often considered to be an imperative for high-quality colleges and universities, making the requirements and guidelines of the regional accreditors some of the most prominent quality standards in American higher education.

Title IV of the Higher Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1099b) requires that approved accreditation agencies “effectively address the quality of the institution or program in...[r]ecruiting and admissions practices, academic calendars, catalogs, publications, grading, and advertising.”¹

Within this guide, NACAC has compiled the accreditation standards from the six regional accreditors that are most relevant to postsecondary recruitment and admission. Standards related to marketing publications, contractual relationships and public disclosures are also included due to their likely relevance for many admission offices. The full text of regional accreditation standards and supplementary materials referenced in this guide can be found at the web addresses listed in the Sources. Note that some of the supplementary materials list recommended guidelines while others expand on required standards.

¹U.S. Department of Education. “Financial Aid for Postsecondary Students: Accreditation in the United States.” Web. 28 May 2014. <http://www2.ed.gov/admins/finaid/accred/accreditation_pg13.html#RecognitionCriteria>

MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA, PR, VI

Standard 6: Integrity

Excerpts, pages 21-23 of accreditation handbook

An institution may demonstrate integrity through the manner in which it specifies its goals, selects and retains its faculty, admits students, establishes curricula, determines programs of research, pursues its fields of service, demonstrates sensitivity to equity and diversity issues, allocates its resources, serves the public interest, and provides for the success of its students...

In all its activities, whether internal or external, an institution should keep its promises, honor its contracts and commitments, and represent itself truthfully.

Fundamental Elements of Integrity

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- honesty and truthfulness in public relations announcements, advertisements, and recruiting and admissions materials and practices;
- information on institution-wide assessments available to prospective students, including graduation, retention, certification and licensing pass rates, and other outcomes as appropriate to the programs offered;
- institutional information provided in a manner that ensures student and public access, such as print, electronic, or video presentation

Standard 8: Student Admissions and Retention

Whole section, pages 31-33 of accreditation handbook

The institution seeks to admit students whose interests, goals, and abilities are congruent with its mission and seeks to retain them through the pursuit of the students' educational goals.

Context

The student is the primary beneficiary of an institution's educational mission, and the success of an institution or program is best measured by the success of its students during and after their enrollment in an institution's programs. Every institution's admission practices should ensure that students have a reasonable opportunity for success in meeting their educational goals, including transfer, graduate, part-time, adult, and non-degree students, and all others matriculating at the institution.

In some institutions, additional support services may be required in order to ensure the retention and success of its students.

The criteria used to assess the congruence among recruitment, admission, retention and academic success may vary depending on institutional goals and structure and on student needs and educational objectives. Therefore an enrollment management plan for recruitment, retention, marketing, and advertising may assist institutions in ensuring congruence among its efforts. For all institutions, however, admissions criteria and practices are important elements in promoting student retention and success. Analysis of student persistence and attrition data should inform the periodic review of admissions criteria and policies.

Fundamental Elements of Student Admissions

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- admissions policies, developed and implemented, that support and reflect the mission of the institution;
- admissions policies and criteria available to assist the prospective student in making informed decisions;
- programs and services to ensure that admitted students who marginally meet or do not meet the institution's qualifications achieve expected learning goals and higher education outcomes at appropriate points;
- accurate and comprehensive information regarding academic programs, including any required placement or diagnostic testing;
- statements of expected student learning outcomes and information on institution-wide assessment results, as appropriate to the program offered, available to prospective students;
- accurate and comprehensive information, and advice where appropriate, regarding financial aid, scholarships, grants, loans, and refunds;
- published and implemented policies and procedures regarding transfer credit and credit for extra-institutional college level learning that state the criteria established by the institution regarding transfer of credit; and
- ongoing assessment of student success, including but not necessarily limited to retention, that evaluates the match between the attributes of admitted students and the institution's mission and programs, and reflects its findings in its admissions, remediation, and other related policies.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

- review of the enrollment management plan for recruitment, retention, marketing, and advertising;
- evidence of the periodic review of admissions catalogs, viewbooks, web sites, recruiting and other relevant materials for accuracy and effectiveness;
- evidence that support programs and services for low-achieving students are effective in helping students to persist and to achieve learning goals and higher education outcomes;
- review of procedures that guide the admissions program and policies or guidelines regarding the type of information the institution makes known to potential students and the general public;
- evidence of periodic review of the accuracy and effectiveness of financial aid information, scholarship material, and academic advising materials;
- evidence of the utilization of information appropriate to the review of financial aid practices, to reflect whether practices adequately support admission and retention efforts;
- evidence of the utilization of information appropriate to the review of student retention, persistence, and attrition, to reflect whether these are consistent with student and institutional expectations (also under Optional Analysis in Standard 14); or
- evidence of the utilization of attrition information to ascertain characteristics of students who withdraw prior to attaining their educational objectives and, as appropriate, implementation of strategies to improve retention (also under Optional Analysis in Standard 14).

Standard 9: Student Support Services

Excerpt, page 34 of accreditation handbook

Framed by the institution's mission, services should be responsive to the full spectrum of diverse student needs, abilities, and cultures. Dependent upon institutional mission, support services may include but are not limited to admissions, financial aid, registration, orientation, advising, counseling, tutoring, discipline, health, housing, placement, student organizations and activities, cultural programming, child care, security, and athletic activities.

Distance Education, Distributed Learning, and Correspondence Education

Excerpts, page 58-59 of accreditation handbook

Fundamental Elements of Distance Education, Distributed Learning, and Correspondence Education

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities: ... a system of student identity

verification that ensures that the student who participates in class or coursework is the same student who registers and receives academic credit; that students are notified at the time of registration or enrollment of any additional student charges associated with the verification of student identity; and that the identity verification process protects student privacy...

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution's own analysis relative to this accreditation standard: ...analysis of the appropriateness and effectiveness of student services available to students at a distance (admissions, financial aid, registration, advisement, counseling, tutoring, placement, etc.)...

Contractual Relationships And Affiliated Providers

Whole section, pages 60- 62 of accreditation handbook

As institutions seek to improve the ways in which they provide education to their students, they may find it more practical or efficient to enter into consortial arrangements or contractual relationships with other institutions or organizations to provide certain aspects of the education experience, including faculty, recruitment of students, and course/program development. Because an accredited institution is responsible for all activities carried out in the institution's name, the Commission's accreditation standards, policies, and procedures—including those on outcomes assessment, advertising, and recruitment—are fully applicable to any contractual arrangements with another regionally accredited institution or with a non-regionally accredited organization. Contractual relations with for-profit firms or other institutions require diligent care to protect an institution's integrity and to avoid abuse of its accredited status.

An affiliated provider may be a subsidiary, parent, "sister" or other entity (for-profit or non-profit) legally related to the institution or unrelated (except through contractual arrangement) to the accredited institution. Depending on the specific relationship, such providers may or may not be included within the scope of the institution's accreditation. Relevant factors might include matters such as use of the same or similar names, ownership, incorporation, management, control of curricula, finances, acceptance of credits, degree-granting authority, and extent of activities. However, whether or not the affiliate is included within the scope of the institution's accreditation, the nature of the affiliation should be made clear both to the Commission and to the public, with particular attention to such issues as whether the provider offers its own programs or grants its own degrees; whether students are distinct from or considered to be students of the parent institution; what student learning and support services are available; and whether courses offered by the affiliated provider are applicable to a degree program offered by the accredited institution.

Attention should be given to the impact of the affiliated entity on the institution's resources and the institution's ability to fulfill its mission and goals.

Fundamental Elements of Contractual Relationships and Affiliated Providers

An accredited institution is expected to possess or demonstrate the following attributes or activities:

- contractual relationships with affiliated providers, other institutions, or organizations that protect the accredited institution’s integrity and assure that the institution has appropriate oversight of and responsibility for all activities carried out in the institution’s name or on its behalf;
- consistency of any course or program offered via contractual arrangement with the institution’s mission and goals; and
- adequate and appropriate accredited institutional review and approval of work performed by a contracted party in such functional areas as admissions criteria, appointment of faculty, content of courses/programs, instructional support resources (including library/information resources), evaluation of student work, and outcomes assessment.

Institutions and evaluators must consider the totality that is created by the fundamental elements and any other relevant institutional information or analysis. Fundamental elements and contextual statements should not be applied separately as checklists. Where an institution does not possess or demonstrate evidence of a particular Fundamental Element, the institution may demonstrate through alternative information and analysis that it meets the standard.

Optional Analysis and Evidence

In addition to the evidence inherent within or necessary to document the fundamental elements above, the following, although not required, may facilitate the institution’s own analysis relative to this accreditation standard:

- review of documentation of the expressed purposes, roles, and scope of operation for the affiliated entity, including whether the entity offers its own separate courses, programs, or degrees in its own name;
- evidence of the extent to which the affiliated entity is separate from or part of the accredited institution, including relevant factors such as faculty, other personnel, processes, ownership, management, and governance;
- evidence of published public information that clearly and accurately represents the contractual relationship between the institution and the other entity;
- evidence of provision of appropriate protection for enrolled students in the event a contract is terminated or renegotiated;
- review of student profile, including whether students of the affiliated entity are considered to be students of the accredited institution or are eligible for financial aid;
- analysis of the involvement of the institution’s own faculty and other qualified academic professionals in the development and review of curriculum offered through the contractual arrangement;
- analysis of the involvement of faculty and other qualified academic professionals in validating the quality of course materials or

resources(technology-based, etc.) developed by those external to the provider and the institution;

- assessment of the effectiveness and appropriateness of student learning and support services provided by the affiliated entity and/or the primary institution;
- if courses or programs offered as its own by the affiliated entity may be applied to a degree offered by the institution, evidence of academic oversight to assure the comparability and appropriate transferability of such courses; or
- analysis of the impact of the contractual arrangement on the institution’s resources (human, fiscal, physical, etc.) and its ability to fulfill its institutional mission and goals.

Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status

Full text of policy statement

Advertising, Publications, and Promotional Literature

1. Educational programs and services offered should be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.
2. All statements and representations should be clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information should be kept on file and readily available for review.
3. Catalogs and other official publications should be readily available either on-line or in hard copy and should accurately depict:
 - a. institutional purposes and objectives;
 - b. admission requirements and procedures, including policies on transfer credit;
 - c. academic calendars and basic information on programs and courses, with required sequences and frequency of course offering explicitly stated;
 - d. degree and program completion requirements, including length of time normally required to obtain a degree or certificate of completion;
 - e. grievance procedures;
 - f. faculty and primary administrators (full-time and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the conferring institution;
 - g. institutional facilities and services readily available for educational use;
 - h. rules and regulations for conduct;
 - i. grading system and related policies;
 - j. tuition, fees, and other program costs;
 - k. opportunities and requirements for financial aid;
 - l. policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment.

4. In college catalogs and/or official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information should be provided on:
 - a. national and/or state legal requirements for eligibility for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered;
 - b. any unique requirements for career paths, or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.
5. Information on student learning outcomes should be available to prospective students.
6. Policies and procedures regarding transfer of credit and credit for extra-institutional college-level learning should be published and implemented. (See “Transfer Credit, Prior Learning, and Articulation.”)
7. All information required to be disclosed by applicable law or regulation should be disclosed as required.

“The (Name of program) is being evaluated by the Association of _____, and it is anticipated that accreditation will be granted in the near future.”

3. Any reference to state approval should be limited to a brief statement concerning the actual charter, incorporation, license, or registration given.
4. The phrase “fully accredited” must not be used, since no partial accreditation is possible.
5. When accredited status or Candidate for Accreditation status is affirmed in institutional catalogs and other official publications, in print, via the Internet or other electronic transmissions, it should be stated accurately and fully in a comprehensive statement including:
 - a. identifying the accrediting agency by name, including the agency’s address and telephone number
 - b. indicating the scope of accreditation as:
 - i. institutional (regional or national)

Student Recruitment for Admissions

1. Student recruitment should be conducted by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution are clearly specified.
2. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes shall be governed by the same principles as institutional admissions officers and volunteers.
3. No misrepresentations should be made in student recruitment, including:
 - a. assuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified;
 - b. misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates;
 - c. misrepresenting program costs;
 - d. misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program;
 - e. offering to agencies or individual persons money or inducements other than educational services of the institution in exchange for student enrollment.

Example for a Candidate Institution:

The University of _____ is a Candidate for Accreditation by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104. (267-284-5000)

Candidate for Accreditation is a status of affiliation with a regional accrediting commission which indicates that an institution has achieved initial recognition and is progressing toward, but is not assured of, accreditation. It has provided evidence of sound planning, appears to have the resources to implement the plans, and appears to have the potential for reaching its goals within a reasonable time.

Example for an Accredited institution:

The University of _____ is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104. (267-284-5000) The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

Representation of Accredited Status

1. The term “accreditation” is to be used only when accredited status is conferred by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.
2. No statement should be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by the accrediting body.

Statements such as the following are not permissible:

“(Name of institution) has applied for candidacy with the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools”,

Note that the Commission is recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education for accrediting activities in the Middle States region, which includes the District of Columbia, Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Institutions based outside of the United States, whether or not chartered or licensed within the Middle States region, may not make reference to the Commission’s recognition by the U.S. Secretary of Education. Any reference to accredited status may not imply that the Secretary’s recognition of the agency extends to foreign institutions.

- ii. programmatic (curriculum or unit accredited must be specified)
 - Examples:
Programs in Art and Design are accredited by the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, a specialized accrediting agency recognized by (the U.S. Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation).

The Department of Music at the University of _____ is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music, a specialized accrediting agency recognized by (the U.S. Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation).

Programs for the preparation of elementary, secondary, and special education teachers at the bachelor’s and master’s level, for the preparation of guidance counselors at the master’s and specialist degree level, and for school superintendents at the specialist and doctoral degree level are accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, a specialized accrediting agency recognized by (the U.S. Secretary of Education and/or the Council for Higher Education Accreditation).

Under no circumstances may the institution imply that the program is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education.

- 6. The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented.
 - a. The accreditation granted by an institutional accrediting agency has reference to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, statements like “this program is accredited” or “this degree is accredited” are incorrect and misleading. Institutions wishing to make a statement about the relationship of a degree or program to the institution as a whole should state that the program or degree is offered at an institution that is accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education, 3624 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104, 267-284-5000. The statement also should make clear that Commission accreditation does not imply specialized accreditation of the programs offered.

- b. “Free-standing” institutions offering programs in a single field (e.g., a school of art, engineering, or theology), granted accreditation by a regional or national institutional accrediting agency alone, should clearly state that this accreditation does not imply specialized accreditation of the programs offered.
- c. Institutions granted the status of Candidate for Accreditation must use the statement described above under Representation of Accredited Status. In addition, the institution should indicate the effective date (month and year) candidate status was granted.

- 7. The MSCHE logo is the property of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. Its use signifies that the institution is accredited. Institutions that are accredited by the Commission on Higher Education are encouraged to use the MSCHE logo in the acknowledgement of their accredited status. Prior to use of the logo, the institution must receive written permission to do so. If, at any time, an institution’s accreditation is removed, it will be prohibited from using this logo. Use of the logo is prohibited by Applicant and Candidate institutions.

Member institutions should contact the Commission’s Office of Communications for relevant electronic logo files and the Commission’s acceptable use guidelines. To request such permission, contact the MSCHE Office of Communications and Public Relations at (267) 284-5048 or via email at rpokrass@msche.org. The institution will receive an electronic file of the logo along with acceptable use guidelines, including approved colors and wording to accompany the logo.

International Programs Offered by Accredited Institutions Excerpt, page 2 of policy statement

Good Practice for Programs Abroad Offered by Accredited Institutions

- Ensure adequate supervision of the program both on-site and by the home campus including recruitment and admission of students. . .

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

CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT

Standard Four: The Academic Program

Excerpt, pages 10-11 of *Standards for Accreditation*

Integrity in the Award of Academic Credit

- 4.32 The institution demonstrates its clear and ongoing authority and administrative oversight for the academic elements of all courses for which it awards institutional credit or credentials. These responsibilities include course content and the delivery of the instructional program; selection, approval, professional development, and evaluation of faculty; admission, registration, and retention of students; evaluation of prior learning; and evaluation of student progress, including the awarding and recording of credit. The institution retains, even with contractual or other arrangements, responsibility for the design, content, and delivery of courses for which academic credit or degrees are awarded. The institution awarding a joint, dual, or concurrent degree demonstrates that the program is consistent with Commission policy, and that the student learning outcomes meet the institution's own standards and those of the Commission.
- 4.36 The institution publishes requirements for continuation in, termination from, or re-admission to its academic programs that are compatible with its educational purposes. Decisions about the continuing academic standing of enrolled students are based on clearly stated policies and applied by faculty and academic administrators.

Standard Six: Students

Excerpts, pages 17-19 of *Standards for Accreditation*

Consistent with its mission, the institution defines the characteristics of the students it seeks to serve and provides an environment that fosters the intellectual and personal development of its students. It recruits, admits, enrolls, and endeavors to ensure the success of its students, offering the resources and services that provide them the opportunity to achieve the goals of their program as specified in institutional publications. The institution's interactions with students and prospective students are characterized by integrity.

Admissions

- 6.1 Consistent with its mission, the institution sets and achieves realistic goals to enroll a student body that is broadly representative of the population the institution wishes to serve and addresses its own goals for the achievement of diversity among its students.
- 6.2 The institution has an orderly and ethical program of admission that complies with the requirements of legislation concerning equality of educational opportunity. Its admission and retention policies and procedures are clear, consistent with its mission and purposes, and available to all students and prospective students electronically and through other appropriate publications.
- 6.3 Standards for admission ensure that student qualifications and expectations are compatible with institutional objectives. Individuals admitted demonstrate through their intellectual and personal qualifications a reasonable potential for success in the programs to which they are admitted. If the institution recruits and admits individuals with identified needs that must be addressed to assure their likely academic success, it applies appropriate mechanisms to address those needs so as to provide reasonable opportunities for that success. Such mechanisms receive sufficient support and are adequate to the needs of those admitted. The institution endeavors to integrate specifically recruited populations into the larger student body and to assure that they have comparable academic experiences.
- 6.4 The institution utilizes appropriate methods of evaluation to identify deficiencies and offers appropriate developmental or remedial support where necessary to prepare students for collegiate study. Such testing and remediation receive sufficient support and are adequate to serve the needs of students admitted. (For admission of graduate students, see 4.24.)

Retention and Graduation

- 6.5 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.
- 6.7 Measures of student success, including 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.

- 6.8 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.
- 6.9 Data on retention, graduation, and other measures of student success are regularly reviewed within the institution, with the results being used for planning, resource allocation, and improvement.

Student Services

- 6.13 A clear description of the nature, extent, and availability of student services is easily available to students and prospective students. Newly enrolled students are provided with an orientation that includes information on student services as well as a focus on academic opportunities, expectations, and support services.
- 6.14 Student financial aid is provided through a well-organized program. Awards are based on the equitable application of clear and publicized criteria. Students are provided with clear and timely information about debt before borrowing.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 6.21 Through a program of regular and systematic evaluation, the institution assesses its effectiveness in admitting and retaining students and the appropriateness and effectiveness of its student services to advance institutional purposes. Information obtained through this evaluation is used to revise these goals and services and improve their achievement.

Standard Nine: Financial Resources

Excerpt, page 22 of *Standards for Accreditation*

- 9.5 The institution and its governing board regularly and systematically review the effectiveness of the institution's financial aid policy and practices in advancing the institution's mission and helping to ensure that the institution enrolls and supports the student body it seeks to serve.

Standard Ten: Public Disclosure

Whole section; pages 24-25 of *Standards for Accreditation*

In presenting itself to students, prospective students, and other members of the interested public, the institution provides information that is complete, accurate, timely, accessible, clear and sufficient for intended audiences to make informed decisions about the institution.

- 10.1 The information published by the institution on its website is sufficient to allow students and prospective students to make informed decisions about their education. The institution's public website includes the information specified elsewhere in this Standard (10.2 – 10.13).

- 10.2 The institution informs the public of the information available about itself and how inquiries can be addressed. It is also responsive to reasonable requests for information about itself. The institution provides notice as to the availability upon request of its publications and its most recent audited financial statement or a fair summary thereof.
- 10.3 The institution's current catalogue describes the institution consistent with its mission statement and sets forth the obligations and responsibilities of both students and the institution. The catalogue or other authoritative publications present information relative to admission and attendance. Institutions relying on electronic catalogues ensure the availability of archival editions sufficient to serve the needs of alumni and former and returning students.
- 10.4 All forms of print and electronic communications officially representing the institution are consistent with catalogue content and accurately portray the conditions and opportunities available at the institution.
- 10.5 The institution publishes its mission, objectives, and expected educational outcomes; its status as a public or independent institution; if independent, its status as a not-for-profit or for-profit institution; any religious affiliation; requirements and procedures and policies related to admissions and the transfer of credit; a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements; student fees, charges and refund policies; rules and regulations for student conduct; procedures for student appeals and complaints; other items related to attending or withdrawing from the institution; academic programs, courses currently offered, and other available educational opportunities; and academic policies and procedures and the requirements for degrees or other forms of academic recognition.
- 10.6 The institution publishes a list of its current faculty, indicating departmental or program affiliation, distinguishing between those who have full- and part-time status, showing degrees held and the institutions granting them. The names and positions of administrative officers, and the names and principal affiliations of members of the governing board are also included.
- 10.7 The institution publishes the locations and programs available at branch campuses, other instructional locations, including those overseas operations at which students can enroll for a degree, along with a description of the programs and services available at each location.
- 10.8 The institution clearly indicates those programs, courses, services, and personnel not available during a given academic year. It does not list as current any courses not taught for two consecutive years that will not be taught during the third consecutive year.
- 10.9 The institution publishes a description of the size and characteristics of the student body, the campus setting, the availability of academic and other support services, the range of co-curricular and non-academic opportunities available to students;

and those institutional learning and physical resources from which a student can reasonably be expected to benefit.

- 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.
- 10.11 The institution publishes information about the total cost of education, including the availability of financial aid and the typical length of study. The expected amount of student debt upon graduation is provided to help students and prospective students make informed decisions.
- 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.
- 10.13 The institution's statements about its current accredited status are accurately and explicitly worded. An institution placed on probation by the New England Association discloses this status in its catalogue and recruitment materials and in any other publication, print or electronic, in which the institution's accreditation is mentioned, as well as the availability of additional information on its probationary status.

Institutional Effectiveness

- 10.14 Through a systematic process of periodic review, the institution ensures that its print and electronic publications are complete, accurate, available, and current. The results of the review are used for improvement.

Student Achievement and Success

Excerpts; pages 1-3 of policy statement

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.

Students

- 6.5 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.
- 6.7 Measures of student success, including 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.
- 6.8 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.

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.

NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS HIGHER LEARNING COMMISSION

AR, AZ, CO, IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, OK, NM, SD, WI, WV, WY

Eligibility Requirements

Excerpts; page 8-9 of *Policy Book*

Information to the Public

The institution makes public its statements of mission, vision, and values; full descriptions of its program requirements; its requirements for admission both to the institution and to particular programs or majors; its policies on acceptance of transfer credit, including how credit is applied to degree requirements; clear and accurate information on all student costs, including tuition, fees, training and incidentals, and its policy on refunds; its policies regarding good standing, probation, and dismissal; all residency requirements; and grievance and complaint procedures.

The institution portrays clearly and accurately to the public its accreditation status with national, specialized, and professional accreditation agencies as well as with the Higher Learning Commission, including a clear distinction between Candidate or Accredited status and an intention to seek status.

Student Support Services

The institution makes available to its students support services appropriate for its mission, such as advising, academic records, financial aid, and placement.

Criteria for Accreditation

Excerpts; pages 11-12 of *Policy Book*

Criterion One: Mission – Core Components

- 1.A. The institution's mission is broadly understood within the institution and guides its operations. ... (2) The institution's academic programs, student support services, and enrollment profile are consistent with its stated mission. ...
- 1.C. The institution understands the relationship between its mission and the diversity of society... (2) The institution's processes and activities reflect attention to human diversity as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Criterion Two: Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct – Core Components

- 2.B. The institution presents itself clearly and completely to its students and to the public with regard to its programs,

requirements, faculty and staff, costs to students, control, and accreditation relationships.

Assumed Practices

Excerpts, pages 16-17 of *Policy Book*

Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct

2. The institution has ethics policies for faculty and staff regarding conflict of interest, nepotism, recruitment and admissions, financial aid, privacy of personal information, and contracting.
5. The institution makes readily available to students and to the general public clear and complete information including:
 - (a) statements of mission, vision, and values;
 - (b) full descriptions of the requirements for its programs, including all pre-requisite courses;
 - (c) requirements for admission both to the institution and to particular programs or majors;
 - (d) policies on acceptance of transfer credit, including how credit is applied to degree requirements(...);
 - (e) all student costs, including tuition, fees, training, and incidentals; its financial aid policies, practices, and requirements; and its policy on refunds;
 - (f) policies regarding academic good standing, probation, and dismissal; residency or enrollment requirements (if any);
 - (g) a full list of its instructors and their academic credentials;
 - (h) its relationship with any parent organization (corporation, hospital, or church, or other entity that owns the institution) and any external providers of its instruction.
6. The institution assures that all data it makes public are accurate and complete, including those reporting on student achievement of learning and student persistence, retention, and completion.
7. The institution portrays clearly and accurately to the public its current status with the Higher Learning Commission and with specialized, national, and professional accreditation agencies...

Policies Required By Federal Regulation

Excerpts, page 29 of *Policy Book*

Required Information for Students and the Public

An institution demonstrates that it makes available to students and the public fair, accurate and complete information in catalogs, student handbooks, and other publications that include, at a minimum, information about the institution's calendar, grading, admissions, academic program requirements, tuition and fees, and refund policies.

NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

AK, ID, MT, NE, OR, UT, WA

Eligibility Requirements

Excerpts, pages 19–21 of *Accreditation Handbook*

3. *Mission and Core Themes:* The institution's mission and core themes are clearly defined and adopted by its governing board(s) consistent with its legal authorization, and are appropriate to a degree-granting institution of higher education. The institution's purpose is to serve the educational interests of its students and its principal programs lead to recognized degrees. The institution devotes all, or substantially all, of its resources to support its education mission and core themes.
10. *Faculty:* Consistent with its mission and core themes, the institution employs and regularly evaluates the performance of appropriately qualified faculty sufficient in number to achieve its educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic programs whenever offered and however delivered.
16. *Admissions:* The institution publishes its student admission policy which specifies the characteristics and qualifications appropriate for its programs, and it adheres to that policy in its admissions procedures and practices.
17. *Public Information:* The institution publishes in a catalog and/or on a website current and accurate information regarding: its mission and core themes; admission requirements and procedures; grading policy; information on academic programs and courses; names, titles and academic credentials of administrators and faculty; rules and regulations for student conduct; rights and responsibilities of students; tuition, fees, and other program costs; refund policies and procedures; opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and the academic calendar.
22. *Student Achievement:* The institution identifies and publishes the expected learning outcomes for each of its degree and certificate programs. The institution engages in regular and ongoing assessment to validate student achievement of these learning outcomes.
24. *Scale and Sustainability:* The institution demonstrates that its operational scale (e.g., enrollment, human and financial resources and institutional infrastructure) is sufficient to fulfill its mission and achieve its core themes in the present and will be sufficient to do so in the foreseeable future.

Standards for Accreditation: Standard Two—Resources and Capacity

Excerpts, pages 24–31 of *Accreditation Handbook*

Students

- 2.A.15 Policies and procedures regarding students' rights and responsibilities—including academic honesty, appeals, grievances, and accommodations for persons with disabilities—are clearly stated, readily available, and administered in a fair and consistent manner.
- 2.A.16 The institution adopts and adheres to admission and placement policies that guide the enrollment of students in courses and programs through an evaluation of prerequisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to assure a reasonable probability of student success at a level commensurate with the institution's expectations. Its policy regarding continuation and termination from its education programs—including its appeals process and readmission policy—are clearly defined, widely published, and administered in a fair and consistent manner.
- 2.A.17 The institution maintains and publishes policies that clearly state its relationship to co-curricular activities and the roles and responsibilities of students and the institution for those activities, including student publications and other student media, if offered.

Institutional Integrity

- 2.A.21 The institution represents itself clearly, accurately, and consistently through its announcements, statements, and publications. It communicates its academic intentions, programs, and services to students and to the public and demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. It regularly reviews its publications to assure integrity in all representations about its mission, programs, and services.
- 2.A.25 The institution accurately represents its current accreditation status and avoids speculation on future accreditation actions or status. It uses the terms "Accreditation" and "Candidacy" and related terms only when such status is conferred by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Educational Resources

- 2.C.7 Credit for prior experiential learning, if granted, is: a) guided by approved policies and procedures; b) awarded only at the undergraduate level to enrolled students; c) limited to a maximum of 25% of the credits needed for a degree; d) awarded only for documented student achievement equivalent to expected learning achievement for courses with the institution's regular curricular offerings; e) granted only upon the recommendation of appropriately qualified teaching faculty. Credit granted for prior

experiential learning is so identified on students' transcripts and may not duplicate other credit awarded to the student in fulfillment of degree requirements. The institution makes no assurances regarding the number of credits to be awarded prior to the completion of the institution's review process.

2.C.8 The final judgment in accepting transfer credit is the responsibility of the receiving institution. Transfer credit is accepted according to procedures which provide adequate safeguards to ensure high academic quality, relevance to the students' programs, and integrity of the receiving institution's degrees. In accepting transfer credit, the receiving institution ensures that the credit accepted is appropriate for its programs and comparable in nature, content, academic quality, and level to credit it offers. Where patterns of student enrollment between institutions are identified, the institution develops articulation agreements between institutions.

Graduate Programs

2.C.13 Graduate admission and retention policies ensure that student qualifications and expectations are compatible with the institution's mission and the program's requirements. Transfer of credit is evaluated according to clearly defined policies by faculty with a major commitment to graduate education or by a representative body of faculty responsible for the degree program at the receiving institution.

2.C.14 Graduate credit may be granted for internships, field experiences, and clinical practices that are an integral part of the graduate degree program. Credit toward graduate degrees may not be granted for experiential learning that occurred prior to matriculation into the graduate degree program. Unless the institution structures the graduate learning experience, monitors that learning, and assesses learning achievements, graduate credit is not granted for learning experiences external to the students' formal graduate programs.

Student Support Services

2.D.3 Consistent with its mission, core themes, and characteristics, the institution recruits and admits students with the potential to benefit from its educational offerings. It orients students to ensure they understand the requirements related to their programs of study and receive timely, useful, and accurate information and advising about relevant academic requirements, including graduation and transfer policies.

2.D.4 In the event of program elimination or significant change in requirements, the institution makes appropriate arrangements to ensure that students enrolled in the program have an opportunity to complete their program in a timely manner with a minimum of disruption.

2.D.5 The institution publishes in a catalog, or provides in a manner reasonably available to students and other stakeholders, current and accurate information that includes:

- a) Institutional mission and core themes;
- b) Entrance requirements and procedures;
- c) Grading policy;
- d) Information on academic programs and courses, including degree and program completion requirements, expected learning outcomes, required course sequences, and projected timelines to completion based on normal student progress and the frequency of course offerings;
- e) Names, titles, degrees held, and conferring institutions for administrators and full-time faculty;
- f) Rules, regulations for conduct, rights, and responsibilities;
- g) Tuition, fees, and other program costs;
- h) Refund policies and procedures for students who withdraw from enrollment;
- i) Opportunities and requirements for financial aid; and
- j) Academic calendar.

2.D.6 Publications describing educational programs include accurate information on:

- a) National and/or state legal eligibility requirements for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered;
- b) Descriptions of unique requirements for employment and advancement in the occupation or profession.

2.D.7 The institution adopts and adheres to policies and procedures regarding the secure retention of student records, including provision for reliable and retrievable backup of those records, regardless of their form. The institution publishes and follows established policies and release of student records.

2.D.8 The institution provides an effective and accountable program of financial aid consistent with its mission, student needs, and institutional resources. Information regarding categories of financial assistance (such as scholarships, grants, and loans) is published and made available to prospective and enrolled students.

2.D.9 Students receiving financial assistance are informed of any repayment obligations. The institution regularly monitors its student loan programs and the institution's loan default rate.

2.D.13 Intercollegiate athletic and other co-curricular programs (if offered) and related financial operations are consistent with the institution's mission and conducted with appropriate institutional oversight. Admission requirements and procedures, academic standards, degree requirements, and financial aid awards for students participating in co-curricular programs are consistent with those for other students.

Requirements for Contractual Arrangements

Full policy, pages 51-54 of *Accreditation Handbook*

In establishing contractual arrangements with organizations not regionally accredited, institutions are expected to demonstrate that the following requirements have been met. The not-for-profit institutions should establish that their tax exempt status, as governed by state or federal regulations, will not be affected by such contractual arrangements with a for-profit organization.

- a. The Contract:
 - i. should be executed only by duly designated officers of the institutions and their counterparts in the contracting organization. While other faculty and administrative representatives will undoubtedly be involved in the contract negotiations, care should be taken to avoid implied or apparent power to execute the contract by unauthorized personnel.
 - ii. should establish a definite understanding between the institution and contractor regarding the work to be performed, the period of the agreement, and the conditions under which any possible renewal or renegotiation of the contract would take place;
 - iii. should clearly vest the ultimate responsibility for the performance of the necessary control functions for the educational offering with the accredited institution granting credit for the offering. Such performance responsibility by the credit-granting institution would minimally consist of adequate provisions for review and approval of work performed by the contractor in each functional area.
 - iv. should clearly establish the responsibilities of the institution and contractor regarding:
 - a) indirect costs
 - b) approval of salaries
 - c) equipment
 - d) subcontracts and travel
 - e) property ownership and accountability
 - f) inventions and patents
 - g) publications and copyrights
 - h) accounting records and audits
 - i) security
 - j) termination costs
 - k) tuition refund
 - l) student records
 - m) faculty facilities
 - n) safety regulations
 - o) insurance coverage
- b. Enrollment Agreement
 - i. The enrollment agreement should clearly outline the obligations of both the institution and the student, and a copy of the enrollment agreement should be furnished to the student before any payment is made.
 - ii. The institution should determine that applicants are fully informed about the nature of the obligation they are entering into, and their responsibilities and rights under the enrollment agreement before they sign it.
 - iii. No enrollment agreement should be binding until it has been accepted by the authorities of the institution vested with this responsibility.
- c. Tuition Policies
 - i. Rates
 - a) The total tuition for any specific given course should be the same for all persons at any given time. Group training contracts showing lower individual rates may be negotiated with business, industrial, or governmental agencies.
 - b) Tuition charges in courses should be bona fide, effective on specific dates, and applicable to all who enroll thereafter or are presently in school, provided the enrollment agreement so stipulates.
 - c) All extra charges and costs incidental to training should be disclosed to prospective student before they are enrolled.
 - d) The institution should show that the total tuition charges for each of its courses are reasonable in the light of the service to be rendered, the equipment to be furnished, and its operating costs.
 - ii. Refunds and Cancellations
 - a) The institution should have a fair and equitable tuition refund and cancellation policy.
 - b) The institution should publish its tuition refund and cancellation policy in its catalog or other appropriate literature.
 - iii. Collection Practices
 - a) Methods used by an institution in requesting or demanding payment should follow sound and ethical business practices.
 - b) If promissory notes or contracts for tuition are sold or discounted to third parties by the institution, enrollees or their financial sponsors should be aware of this action.

d. Student Recruitment

i. Advertising and Promotional Literature

- a) All advertisements and promotional literature used should be truthful and avoid leaving any false, misleading, or exaggerated impressions with respect to the school, its personnel, its courses and services, or the occupational opportunities for its graduates.
- b) All advertising and promotional literature should clearly indicate that education, not employment, is being offered.
- c) All advertising and promotional literature should include the correct name of the school. So-called “blind” advertisements are considered misleading and unethical.

ii. Field Agents

- a) An institution is responsible to its current and prospective students for the representations made by its field representatives (including agencies and other authorized persons and firms soliciting students), and therefore should select each of them with the utmost care, provide them with adequate training, and arrange for proper supervision of their work.
- b) It is the responsibility of an institution to conform to the laws and regulations of each of the states in which it operates or solicits students and in particular to see that each of its field representatives working in any such state is properly licensed or registered as required by the laws of the state.
- c) If field representatives are authorized to prepare and/or run advertising or to use promotional materials, the institution should accept full responsibility for the materials used and should approve any such promotional materials in advance of their use.
- d) When field representatives are authorized to collect money from an applicant for enrollment, they should leave with the applicant a receipt for the money collected and a copy of the enrollment agreement.
- e) No field representative should use any title, such as “counselor,” “advisor,” or “registrar” which may indicate that duties and responsibilities are other than they actually are.
- f) No field representative should violate, orally or otherwise, any of the standards applicable to advertising and promotional materials.

Institutional Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status

Full policy, pages 57-59 of *Accreditation Handbook*

All candidate and accredited institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising, student recruitment, and representation of accredited status. Responsible self-regulation requires rigorous attention to principles of good practice.

B. Advertising, Publications, Promotional Literature

1. Educational programs and services offered should be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities.
2. All statements and representations should be clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information should be kept on file and readily available for review.
3. Catalogs and other official publications should be readily available and accurately depict:
 - a. institutional mission and goals;
 - b. entrance requirements and procedures;
 - c. basic information on programs and courses, with required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated;
 - d. degree and program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certification of completion;
 - e. faculty (full-time and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the conferring institution;
 - f. institutional facilities readily available for educational use;
 - g. rules and regulations for conduct;
 - h. tuition, fees, and other program costs;
 - i. opportunities and requirements for financial aid;
 - j. policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw from enrollment; and
 - k. academic calendar.
4. An institution is expected to include in its general catalog a clear and complete statement of its requirements for general education and/or related instruction, as appropriate.

5. The institution's catalogs and official publications describing career opportunities, should provide clear and accurate information should be provided regarding:
 - a. national and/or state legal requirements for eligibility for licensure or entry into an occupation or profession for which education and training are offered;
 - b. any unique requirements for career paths, or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.
 - c. the caveat that certification obtained through the completion of all undergraduate and graduate professional programs does not imply or guarantee reciprocity or job attainment in another state or in another country.

C. Student Recruitment for Admissions

1. Student recruitment should be conducted by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution are clearly specified.
2. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes shall be governed by the same principles as institutional admissions officers and volunteers.
3. The following practices in student recruitment are to be scrupulously avoided:
 - a. ensuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified;
 - b. misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates;
 - c. misrepresenting program costs;
 - d. misrepresenting transfer of credit and acceptance of degrees attained at other institutions;
 - e. misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program; and
 - f. offering to agencies or individual persons money or inducements other than educational services of the institution in exchange for student enrollment. (Except for awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific criteria related to merit or financial need.)

D. Representation of Accredited Status

1. The term "accreditation" is to be used only when accredited status is conferred by an accrediting body recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.
2. No statement should be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by any accrediting body. Statements like the following are not permissible:

- a. (Institution) has applied for candidacy with (accrediting body).
- b. (Institution) is a Candidate for Accreditation with (accrediting body) and full accreditation is anticipated.
- c. The (Program) is being evaluated by (accrediting body) and accreditation is expected in the near future.

3. Any reference to state approval should be limited to a brief statement concerning the actual charter, incorporation, license, or registration given.

4. The Commission asks that the following statement be used by the institution for disclosing its accredited status on its website and in catalogues, brochures, advertisements, etc.

The following statement, in its entirety, must be used when an institution includes within its website, catalogue, or other material a statement which will give the public a better idea of the meaning of regional accreditation:

_____ College (University) is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

Accreditation of an institution of higher education by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities indicates that it meets or exceeds criteria for the assessment of institutional quality evaluated through a peer review process. An accredited college or university is one which has available the necessary resources to achieve its stated purposes through appropriate educational programs, is substantially doing so, and gives reasonable evidence that it will continue to do so in the foreseeable future. Institutional integrity is also addressed through accreditation.

Accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and University is not partial but applies to the institution as a whole. As such, it is not a guarantee of every course or program offered, or the competence of individual graduates. Rather, it provides reasonable assurance about the quality of opportunities available to students who attend the institution.

Inquiries regarding an institution's accredited status by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities should be directed to the administrative staff of the institution. Individuals may also contact:

Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
 8060 165th Avenue N.E., Suite 100
 Redmond, WA 98052
 (425) 558-4224
www.nwccu.org

Accreditation by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities refers to the institution as a whole. Therefore, statements like "fully accredited" or "this program is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities" or "this degree is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities" are incorrect and should not be used.

Transfer and Award of Academic Credit Policy

Excerpt, pages 81-84 of *Accreditation Handbook*

All institutions have a responsibility to furnish transcripts and other documents necessary for a receiving institution to judge the quality and quantity of the work. Institutions also have the responsibility to advise the students that the work reflected on the transcript may or may not be accepted by a receiving institution.

Admissions and Degree Purposes: At some institutions there may be differences between the acceptance of credit for admission purposes and the applicability of credit for degree purposes. A receiving institution may accept previous work, place a credit value on it, and enter it on the transcript. However, that previous work, because of its nature and not its inherent quality, may be determined to have no applicability to a specific degree to be pursued by the student. Institutions have a responsibility to make this distinction and its implications clear to students before they enroll. This should be a matter of full disclosure, with the best interests of the student in mind. Institutions also should make every reasonable effort to reduce the gap between credits accepted and credits applied toward an educational credential.

Unaccredited Institutions: Higher education institutions that are not accredited by a USDOE recognized regional or national accrediting agency may lack that status for reasons unrelated to questions of quality. Such institutions, however, cannot provide a reliable, third-party assurance that they meet or exceed minimum standards. That being the case, students transferring from such institutions may encounter special problems in gaining admission and in transferring credits to accredited institutions. Institutions admitting students from unaccredited institutions should take special steps to validate credits previously earned.

Non-U.S. Institutions: In most cases, non-U.S. institutions are chartered and authorized by their national governments, usually through a ministry of education or head of state. Although this provides for a standardization within a country, it does not produce useful information about comparability from one country to another.

Disclosure: The institution's policy on transfer credit is publicly disclosed through its website and other relevant publications. The publication includes a statement of the criteria established by the institution regarding the transfer of credit earned at another institution of higher education along with a list of institutions with which it has articulation agreements.

SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS COMMISSION ON COLLEGES

AZ, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, TX, VA, AND LATIN AMERICA

Section Three: Comprehensive Services

Excerpts; page 28 of *The Principles of Accreditation*

All Educational Programs

- 3.4.3 The institution publishes admissions policies that are consistent with its mission.
- 3.4.4 The institution publishes policies that include criteria for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, Advanced Placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution's own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript.
- 3.4.5 The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution.

Advertising, Student Recruitment and Representation of Accredited Status

Full text of guideline

All accredited higher education institutions, or individuals acting on their behalf, must exhibit integrity and responsibility in advertising, student recruitment, and representation of accredited status. Responsible self-regulation requires rigorous attention to principles of good practice.

Advertising, Publications, Promotional Literature

1. Educational programs and services offered should be the primary emphasis of all advertisements, publications, promotional literature, and recruitment activities
2. All statements and representations should be clear, factually accurate, and current. Supporting information should be kept on file and readily available for review.
3. Catalogs or other official publications should be readily available and accurately depict
 - institutional purposes and goals
 - entrance requirements and procedure

- basic information on programs and courses, with required sequences and frequency of course offerings explicitly stated
- degree and program completion requirements, including length of time required to obtain a degree or certificate of completion
- faculty (full-time and part-time listed separately) with degrees held and the conferring institution
- institutional facilities readily available for educational use
- rules and regulations for conduct
- tuition, fees, and other program costs
- opportunities and requirements for financial aid
- policies and procedures for refunding fees and charges to students who withdraw.

4. In college catalogs and/or official publications describing career opportunities, clear and accurate information should be provided on any unique requirements for career paths, or for employment and advancement opportunities in the profession or occupation described.

Student Recruitment for Admissions

1. Student recruitment should be conducted by well-qualified admissions officers and trained volunteers whose credentials, purposes, and position or affiliation with the institution is clearly specified.
2. Independent contractors or agents used by the institution for recruiting purposes shall be governed by the same principles as institutional admission officers and volunteers.
3. The following practices in student recruitment are to be scrupulously avoided:
 - a. assuring employment unless employment arrangements have been made and can be verified,
 - b. misrepresenting job placement and employment opportunities for graduates,
 - c. misrepresenting program costs,
 - d. misrepresenting abilities required to complete intended program, and
 - e. offering money or inducements other than educational services of the institution in exchange for student enrollment. (Except for awards of privately endowed restricted funds, grants or scholarships are to be offered only on the basis of specific criteria related to merit or financial need.)

Representation of Accredited Status

1. The term "accreditation" is to be used only when accredited status is conferred by an accrediting body.
2. No statement should be made about possible future accreditation status or qualification not yet conferred by the accrediting body. Statements like the following are not permissible: "(Name of institution) has applied for candidacy with the Commission on

Colleges of the Southern Association;" OR "The (program name) is being evaluated by the National Association of and it is anticipated that accreditation will be granted in the near future."

3. Any reference to state approval should be limited to a brief statement concerning the actual charter, incorporation, license, or registration given.
4. The phrase "fully accredited" should be avoided, since partial accreditation is not possible.
5. When accredited status is affirmed in institutional catalogs and other official publications, it should be stated accurately and fully in a comprehensive statement. (See Comprehensive Standard 3.14.1 in the Principles of Accreditation.)
6. The accredited status of a program should not be misrepresented.
 - a. Accreditation granted by an institutional accrediting body has reference to the quality of the institution as a whole. Since institutional accreditation does not imply specific accreditation of any particular program in the institution, statements like "this program is accredited," or "this degree is accredited," are incorrect and misleading.
 - b. "Free-standing" institutions offering programs in a single field (e.g., a school of art, engineering, or theology) and granted accreditation by a regional or national institutional accrediting body alone, should clearly state that this accreditation does not imply specialized accreditation of the programs offered.

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES SENIOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY COMMISSION

CA, HI, PACIFIC BASIN

Standard 1: Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Objectives

Excerpt, pages 12-13 of *Handbook of Accreditation*

Integrity and Transparency

- 1.4 Consistent with its purposes and character, the institution demonstrates an appropriate response to the increasing diversity in society through its policies, its educational and co-curricular programs, its hiring and admissions criteria, and its administrative and organizational practices.

Guideline: The institution has demonstrated institutional commitment to the principles enunciated in the WASC Diversity Policy.

- 1.6 The institution truthfully represents its academic goals, programs, services, and costs to students and to the larger public. The institution demonstrates that its academic programs can be completed in a timely fashion. The institution treats such students fairly and equitably through established policies and procedures addressing student conduct, grievances, human subjects in research, disability, and financial matters, including refunds and financial aid.

Guideline: The institution has published or has readily available policies on student grievances and complaints, refunds, etc. The institution does not have a history of adverse findings against it with respect to violation of these policies. Records of student complaints are maintained for a six-year period. The institution clearly defines and distinguishes between the different types of credits it offers and between degree and non-degree credit, and accurately identifies the type and meaning of the credit awarded in its transcripts. The institution's policy on grading and student evaluation is clearly stated and provides opportunity for appeal as needed.

Standard 2: Achieving Educational Objectives Through Core Functions

Excerpt, pages 14-17 of *Handbook of Accreditation*

Student Learning and Success

- 2.10 The institution demonstrates that students make timely progress toward the completion of their degrees and that an acceptable

proportion of students complete their degrees in a timely fashion, given the institution's mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs it offers. The institution collects and analyzes student data, disaggregated by appropriate demographic categories and areas of study. It tracks achievement, satisfaction, and the extent to which the campus climate supports student success. The institution regularly identifies the characteristics of its students; assesses their preparation, needs, and experiences; and uses these data to improve student achievement.

Guideline: The institution disaggregates data according to racial, ethnic, gender, age, economic status, disability, and other categories, as appropriate. The institution benchmarks its retention and graduate rates against its own aspirations as well as the rates of peer institutions.

- 2.2b The institution's graduate programs establish clearly stated objectives differentiated from and more advanced than undergraduate programs in terms of admissions, curricula, standards of performance, and student learning outcomes. Graduate programs foster students' active engagement with the literature of the field and create a culture that promotes the importance of scholarship and/or professional practice. Ordinarily, a baccalaureate degree is required for admission to a graduate program.
- 2.12 The institution ensures that all students understand the requirements of their academic programs and receive timely, useful, and complete information and advising about relevant academic requirements.
- Guideline:* Recruiting materials and advertising truthfully portray the institution. Students have ready access to accurate, current, and complete information about admissions, degree requirements, course offerings, and education costs.
- 2.13 The institution provides academic and other student support services such as tutoring, services for students with disabilities, financial aid counseling, career counseling and placement, residential life, athletics, and other services and programs as appropriate, which meet the needs of the specific types of students that the institution serves and the program offers.
- 2.14 Institutions that serve transfer students provide clear, accurate, and timely information, ensure equitable treatment under academic policies, provide such students access to student services, and ensure that they are not unduly disadvantaged by the transfer process.

Guidelines: Formal policies or articulation agreements are developed with feeder institutions that minimize the loss of credits through transfer credits.

International Students Policy

Full text of policy statement

If an institution recruits and enrolls international students, the institution must demonstrate that it admits and serves such students in a responsible and sensitive manner.

1. Where the number of international students is significant, the institutional statement of purposes includes the education of international students and recognizes the consequent implications for the institution. Special services, including orientation, community assistance, personal and academic counseling, and special language programs, are adequate, available, and provided by persons specially trained for these purposes.
2. Before international students are admitted:
 - a. Foreign credentials are reviewed by competent evaluators who apply clear and consistent institutional standards. Appropriate English language skills for undergraduate- or graduate-level work are required for admission;
 - b. Representations regarding the institution, both written and oral, are accurate, up-to-date, and effectively communicated; and
 - c. Governmental regulations regarding the issuance of documents for new and continuing international students are made known to students, and are followed.
3. Once international students are on campus, they are subject to the same procedures, safeguards, legal protection, and general opportunities accorded domestic students. The institution should ensure that:
 - a. Undue reliance upon tuition or fee income from students who matriculate from one particular country or region is avoided;
 - b. Special fees, if assessed for international students, are dedicated to the provision of additional services for them;
 - c. Tuition and fees for international students are not significantly out of proportion to those charged to other students subject to similar legal residence requirements;
 - d. Required immigration, academic, and special services information is immediately accessible;
 - e. Mandated and technical services are in compliance with US government regulations for international students and are carried out by trained personnel; and
 - f. The academic freedom of international students is protected.

Contracts with Unaccredited Organizations Policy

Full text of policy statement

An accredited institution is solely responsible for the academic and fiscal elements of all instructional programs and courses for which the institution provides credit. These responsibilities include course content and the delivery

of the instructional program; selection and approval of faculty; admission, registration, and retention of students; evaluation of prior learning; evaluation of student progress; and the awarding and recording of credit. An accredited institution does not lend its accreditation to unaccredited agencies or individuals who operate as contractors to develop and market educational programs. Unaccredited agencies wishing to offer instructional programs may seek their own accreditation, via established procedures.

An accredited institution may enter into contractual relationships which will support and enhance its instructional programs or provide useful auxiliary services and facilities. These include:

1. Assisting with publicizing programs and recruitment of students, but not with admission;
2. Providing instructional resources and facilities, especially those not available to students at the accredited institution. These include cooperative efforts that permit students or interns to use the facilities of business and industry, hospitals, public agencies, etc.;
3. Providing resource people, especially those with knowledge and abilities not available at the institution; and
4. Providing an independent evaluation of the program(s) offered by the institution.

Accredited institutions may also enter into contractual relationships with public or private agencies designed to provide either regular or special instructional program to their employees. These include contractual arrangements with public or independent schools to provide instruction for teachers, with hospitals to provide instruction for medical personnel, with business and industry for instruction of special groups of employees, etc. In all cases, the accredited institution is directly responsible for all academic and fiscal matters related to the program.

Existing contracts should be reviewed against this policy.

Overseas Educational Programs for Non-US Nationals: The Principles of Good Practice

Excerpt; pages 2-3 of policy statement

Admissions and Records

14. International students admitted abroad meet admissions requirements similar to those used for international students admitted to the US campus, including appropriate language proficiencies.
15. The US institution exercises control over recruitment and admission of students in the international program.
16. All international students admitted to the US program are recognized as students of the US institution.
17. All college-level academic credits earned in the international program are applicable to degree programs at the US institution.

18. The US institution maintains official records of academic credit earned in its international program.
19. The official transcripts of record issued by the US institution follow the institution's practices in identifying, by site or through course numbering, the credits earned in its off-campus programs.

Ethics and Public Disclosure

27. The US institution assures that all media presentations about the international program are factual, fair and accurate.

28. The US institution's primary catalog describes its international program.
29. The US institution does not sell or franchise the rights to its name or its accreditation.
30. The US institution assures that all references to transfer of academic credit reflect the reality of US practice.
31. The US institution assures that if US accreditation is mentioned in materials related to the international program, the role and purpose of US accreditation is fairly and accurately explained within these materials.

SOURCES

MIDDLE STATES COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION

3624 Market Street
2nd Floor West
Philadelphia, PA 19104
Phone: (267) 284-5000
Email: info@msche.org or españolinfo@msche.org
Web: www.msche.org

Accreditation Handbook

Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation

- Revised March 2011
- Available online: <http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX-2011-WEB.pdf>

Selected Policies

Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status

- Effective November 2010
- Available online: <http://www.msche.org/documents/P4.2-AdvertisingRecruitmentrevised62509-1.pdf>

International Programs Offered by Accredited Institutions

- Available for download: <http://www.msche.org/documents/P5.1-InternationalPrograms.doc>

NEW ENGLAND ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education
3 Burlington Woods Drive
Suite 100
Burlington, MA 01803
Phone: (855) 886-3272
Email: cihe@neasc.org
Web: www.cihe.neasc.org

Accreditation Handbook

Standards for Accreditation

- Revised July 2011
- Available online: http://cihe.neasc.org/downloads/Standards/Standards_for_Accreditation.pdf

Selected Policies

Statement on Student Achievement and Success

- Updated August 2012
- Available online: http://cihe.neasc.org/downloads/POLICIES/Pp85_Student_Achievement_and_Success__Policy_Statement.pdf

NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

Higher Learning Commission
230 South LaSalle Street
Suite 7-500
Chicago, IL 60604
Phone: (800) 621-7440
Email: inquiry@hlcommission.org
Web: www.ncahlc.org

Accreditation Handbook and Selected Policies

Higher Learning Commission Policy Book

- Effective February 2014
- Available online: <http://policy.ncahlc.org/>

NORTHWEST COMMISSION ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

8060 165th Avenue N.E.
Suite 100
Redmond, WA 98052
Phone: (425) 558-4224
Web: www.nwccu.org

Accreditation Handbook

Accreditation Handbook

- Revised 2013
- Available online: <http://www.nwccu.org/Pubs%20Forms%20and%20Updates/Publications/Accreditation%20Handbook,%202013%20Edition.pdf>

SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, GA 30033
Phone: (404) 679-4500
Email: questions@sacscoc.org
Web: www.sacscoc.org

Accreditation Handbook

The Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement

- Effective January 2012
- Available online: <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/2012PrinciplesOfAccreditation.pdf>

Selected Guidelines

Advertising, Student Recruitment, and Representation of Accredited Status

- Revised January 2007
- Available online: <http://www.sacscoc.org/pdf/081705/advertising.pdf>

WESTERN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

Senior College and University Commission

985 Atlantic Avenue

Suite 100

Alameda, CA 94501

Phone: (510) 748-90101

Web: www.wascsenior.org

Accreditation Handbook

2013 Handbook of Accreditation

- Effective July 2013
- Available online: <http://www.wascsenior.org/content/2013-handbook-accreditation>

Selected Policies

Contracts with Unaccredited Organizations Policy

- Available online: <http://www.wascsenior.org/content/contracts-unaccredited-organizations-policy>

International Students Policy

- Available online: <http://www.wascsenior.org/content/international-students-policy>

Overseas Programs for Non-US Nationals Policy

- Available online: <http://www.wascsenior.org/content/overseas-programs-non-us-nationals-policy>