Revisions to the Draft 2013 Handbook
November 2012

This document accompanies the draft 2013 Handbook of Accreditation (Revised November 2012) and provides a summary of revisions made by the Commission at the November 5-7, 2012 meeting. The document is broken into sections that correlate with the Parts of the draft 2013 Handbook. The page numbers where the revisions were made in the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation (Revised November 2012) are provided for easy navigation between the two documents.

Introduction

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Standards of Accreditation (pgs. 10-18)

Standard 1
Defining Institutional Purposes and Ensuring Educational Outcomes

- Institutional Purposes
- Integrity
- Transparency

The institution defines its purposes and establishes educational outcomes objectives aligned with those purposes. The institution has a clear and conscious sense of its essential values and character, its distinctive elements, its place in the higher education community, and its contribution to the public good. It functions with integrity, transparency, and autonomy.

Institutional Purposes
Criteria for Review

1.1 The institution’s formally approved statements of purpose are appropriate for an institution of higher education and clearly define its essential values and character and ways in which it contributes to the public good.

- Public Good Policy

1.2 Educational outcomes objectives are widely recognized throughout the institution, are consistent with stated purposes, and are demonstrably achieved. The institution regularly generates, evaluates, and makes public data about student achievement, including measures of retention and graduation, and evidence of student learning outcomes.
Integrity and Transparency
Criteria for Review

1.3 The institution publicly states its commitment to academic freedom for faculty, staff, and students, and acts accordingly. This commitment affirms that those in the academy are free to share their convictions and responsible conclusions with their colleagues and students in their teaching and in their writing.

GUIDELINES: The institution has published or has readily available policies on academic freedom. For those institutions that strive to instill specific beliefs and world views, policies clearly state how these views are implemented and ensure that these conditions are consistent with generally recognized principles of academic freedom. Due-process procedures are disseminated, demonstrating that faculty and students are protected in their quest for knowledge and truth.

X CFR 3.2, 3.10

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.

• Diversity Policy

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

X CFR 2.2a, 3.1

1.5 Even when supported by or affiliated with governmental, corporate, or religious organizations, the institution has education as its primary purpose and operates as an academic institution with appropriate autonomy.

• Independent Government Boards Policy
• Related Entities Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution does not experience interference in substantive decisions or educational functions by governmental, religious, corporate, or other external bodies that have a relationship to the institution.

X CFR 3.6-3.10

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. and the institution treats 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.

GUIDELINES: 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.

X CFR 2.12
1.7 The institution exhibits integrity and transparency in its operations, as demonstrated by the adoption and implementation of appropriate policies, sound business practices, timely and fair responses to complaints and grievances, and regular evaluation of its performance in these areas. The institution’s finances are regularly audited by qualified independent auditors.

- **Complaints and Third Party Comments Policy**

1.8 The institution is committed to honest and open communication with the Accrediting Commission, to undertaking the accreditation review process with seriousness and candor, to informing the Commission promptly of any matter that could materially affect the accreditation status of the institution, and to abiding by Commission policies and procedures, including all substantive change policies.

- **Compliance Audits Policy**
- **Complaints and Third Party Comments Policy**
- **Degree-Level Approval Policy**
- **Disclosure of Accrediting Documents and Commission Actions Policy**
- **Honorary Degrees Policy**
- **Legal Fees Policy**
- **Maintenance of Accreditation Records Policy**
- **Matters under Litigation Policy**
- **Substantive Change Policy; Substantive Change Manual**
- **Unannounced Visits Policy**
Standard 2
Achieving Educational Objectives through Core Functions

- Teaching and Learning
- Scholarship and Creative Activity
- Student Learning and Success

The institution achieves its institutional purposes and attains its educational outcomes at the institutional and program level through the core functions of teaching and learning, scholarship and creative activity, and support for student learning and success. The institution demonstrates that these core functions are performed effectively by evaluating valid and reliable evidence of learning and by supporting the success of every student.

Teaching and Learning
Criteria for Review

2.1 The institution’s educational programs are appropriate in content, standards of performance, rigor, and nomenclature for the degree level awarded, regardless of mode of delivery. They are staffed by sufficient numbers of faculty qualified for the type and level of curriculum offered.

- Distance Education Policy
- Substantive Change Policy; Substantive Change Manual

GUIDELINE: The content, length, and standards of the institution's academic programs conform to recognized disciplinary or professional standards and are subject to peer review.

X CFR 3.1

2.2 All degrees—undergraduate and graduate—awarded by the institution are clearly defined in terms of entry-level requirements and levels of student achievement necessary for graduation that represent more than simply an accumulation of courses or credits. The institution has a coherent philosophy, expressive of its mission, which guides the meaning of its degrees and processes that ensure the quality and integrity of its degrees.

- Credit Hour Policy
- Credit for Prior Experiential Learning Policy
- Degree Definitions Policy
- Dual Degree Policy
- Joint Degree Policy
- Study Abroad Policy
- Transfer Credit Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution has a program of General Education that is integrated throughout the curriculum.

X CFR 3.1-3.3, 4.3-4.4

2.2a. Baccalaureate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and
depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and lifelong learning. These programs ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking. In addition, baccalaureate programs actively foster creativity, innovation, an appreciation for diversity, ethical and civic responsibility, civic engagement, and the ability to work with others. Baccalaureate programs also ensure breadth for all students in cultural and aesthetic, social and political, and scientific and technical knowledge expected of educated persons. Undergraduate degrees include significant in-depth study in a given area of knowledge (typically described in terms of a program or major).

- Diversity Policy
- Public Good Resource Guide

2.2b. The institution’s graduate programs establish clearly stated outcomes—objectives differentiated from and more advanced than undergraduate programs in terms of admissions, curriculum, standards of performance, and student learning outcomes. Graduate programs foster student’s 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.

GUIDELINES: Institutions offering graduate-level programs employ at least one full-time faculty member for each graduate degree program offered and have a preponderance of the faculty holding the relevant terminal degree in the discipline. Institutions demonstrate that there is a sufficient number of faculty members to exert collective responsibility for the development and evaluation of the curriculum, academic policies, and teaching and mentoring of students.

XCFR 3.1-3.3

2.3 The institution’s student learning outcomes and standards of performance are clearly stated at the course, program, and, as appropriate, institutional level. These outcomes and standards are reflected in academic programs, policies, and curriculum, and are aligned with advisement, library and information and technology resources, and the wider learning environment.

2.4 The institution’s student learning outcomes and standards of performance are developed by faculty and widely shared among faculty, students, staff, and where appropriate, external stakeholders. The institution’s faculty takes collective responsibility for establishing appropriate standards of performance and demonstrating through assessment the achievement of these standards.

2.5 The institution’s academic programs actively involve students in learning, take into account students’ prior knowledge of the subject matter, challenge students to meet high standards of performance, offer opportunities for them to practice, generalize, and apply what they have learned, and provide them with appropriate and ongoing feedback about their performance and how it can be improved.
2.6 The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its standards of performance. The institution ensures that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards that faculty use to evaluate student work.

2.7 All programs offered by the institution are subject to systematic program review. The program review process includes, but is not limited to, analyses of student achievement of the program’s learning outcomes; retention and graduation; and, where appropriate, results of licensing examination and placement, and evidence from external constituencies such as employers and professional organizations.

Scholarship and Creative Activity
Criteria for Review

2.8 The institution clearly defines expectations for research, scholarship, and creative activity for its students and all categories of faculty. The institution actively values and promotes scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovation, and their appropriate to the institution’s purposes and character.

2.9 The institution recognizes and promotes appropriate linkages among scholarship, teaching, assessment, student learning, and service.

Support for Student Learning and Success
Criteria for Review

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 campus climate to support 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.

2.11 Consistent with its purposes, the institution offers co-curricular programs that are aligned with its academic goals, integrated with academic programs, and designed to
support all students’ personal and professional development. The institution assesses the effectiveness of its co-curricular programs and uses the results for improvement.

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.

- Institutional Disclosure to Information for Students Policy

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 programs it offers.

- Collegiate Athletics Policy
- International Students Policy

2.14 Institutions that serve transfer students provide clear, accurate, and timely information about transfer requirements, ensure equitable treatment for such students under academic policies, provide such students access to student services, and ensure that they are not unduly disadvantaged by the transfer requirements process.

- Transfer Credit Policy
- Prior Experiential Learning Policy

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 educational costs.

X CFR 1.6

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

X CFR 1.6
Standard 3
Developing and Applying Resources and Organizational Structures to Ensure Quality and Sustainability

- Faculty and Staff
- Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources
- Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes

The institution sustains its operations and supports the achievement of its educational objectives through its investment in human, physical, fiscal, technological, and information resources and through an appropriate and effective set of organizational and decision-making structures. These key resources and organizational structures promote the achievement of institutional purposes and educational objectives and create a high quality environment for learning.

Faculty and Staff
Criteria for Review

3.1 The institution employs faculty and staff with substantial and continuing commitment to the institution. The faculty and staff are sufficient in number, professional qualifications, and diversity to achieve the institution’s educational objectives, establish and oversee academic policies, and ensure the integrity and continuity of its academic and co-curricular programs wherever and however delivered.

- Collective Bargaining Policy
- Diversity Policy

GUIDELINE: The institution has an instructional staffing plan that includes a sufficient number of full-time faculty with appropriate backgrounds, by discipline and degree level. The institution systematically engages full-time non-tenure track, adjunct, and part-time faculty in such processes as assessment, program review, and faculty development.

X CFR 2.1, 2.2b

3.2 Faculty and staff recruitment, hiring, orientation, workload, incentives, and evaluation practices are aligned with institutional purposes and educational objectives. Evaluation is consistent with best practices in performance appraisal, including multisource feedback and appropriate peer review. Faculty review processes are systematic and are used to improve teaching and learning. For instructional faculty and other teaching staff, evaluation involves the consideration of evidence of teaching effectiveness, including peer and student evaluations of instruction.

X CFR 1.7, 4.3-4.4

3.3 The institution maintains appropriate and sufficiently supported faculty and staff development activities designed to improve teaching, learning, and assessment consistent with the institution’s educational objectives.

GUIDELINE: The institution engages full-time, non-tenure track, adjunct, and part-time faculty members in such processes as assessment, program review, and faculty development.
Fiscal, Physical, and Information Resources
Criteria for Review

3.4 The institution is financially stable and has unqualified independent financial audits and resources sufficient to ensure long-term viability. Resource planning and development include realistic budgeting, enrollment management, and diversification of revenue sources. Resource planning is integrated with all other institutional planning. Resources are aligned with educational purposes and objectives.

GUIDELINE: The institution has functioned without experiencing an operational deficit for at least three years. If an institution has an accumulated deficit, it should provide a detailed explanation and realistic plans for eliminating that deficit.

3.5 The institution provides access to information and technology resources sufficient in scope, quality, currency, and kind at physical sites and online, as appropriate, to support its academic offerings and the research and scholarship of its faculty, staff, and students. These information resources, services, and facilities are consistent with the institution’s educational objectives and are aligned with student learning outcomes.

- Distance Education Policy

Organizational Structures and Decision-Making Processes
Criteria for Review

3.6 The institution’s leadership, at all levels, is characterized by integrity, high performance, appropriate responsibility, and accountability.

3.7 The institution’s organizational structures and decision-making processes are clear and consistent with its purposes, support effective decision making, and place priority on sustaining institutional capacity and educational effectiveness.

GUIDELINE: The institution establishes clear roles, responsibilities, and lines of authority.

3.8 The institution has an independent governing board or similar authority that, consistent with its legal and fiduciary authority, exercises appropriate oversight over institutional integrity, policies, and ongoing operations, including hiring and evaluating the chief executive officer.
- Independent Governing Boards Policy
- Institutional Units in a System Policy
- Institutions With Related Entities Policy

GUIDELINE: The governing body is comprised of members with diverse qualifications required to govern an institution of higher learning. It regularly engages in self-review and training to enhance its effectiveness.
3.9 The institution has a full-time chief executive officer and a chief financial officer whose primary or full-time responsibilities are to the institution. In addition, the institution has a sufficient number of other qualified administrators to provide effective educational leadership and management.

3.10 The institution’s faculty exercises effective academic leadership and acts consistently to ensure both academic quality and the institution’s educational purposes and character are sustained.

GUIDELINE: The institution clearly defines the governance roles, rights, and responsibilities of all categories of full and part-time the faculty.

X CFR 2.1, 2.4, 2.5, 4.3, 4.4
Standard 4
Creating an Organization Committed to Quality Assurance, Institutional Learning, and Improvement

- Implementation of Quality Assurance Processes
- Institutional Learning and Improvement

The institution engages in sustained, evidence-based, and participatory self-reflection about how effectively it is accomplishing its purposes and achieving its educational objectives. The institution considers the changing environment of higher education in envisioning its future. These activities inform both institutional planning and systematic evaluations of educational effectiveness. The results of institutional inquiry, research, and data collection are used to establish priorities, to plan, and to improve quality and effectiveness.

Implementation of Quality Assurance Processes
Criteria for Review

4.1 The institution employs a deliberate set of quality-assurance processes in both academic and non-academic areas, including new curriculum and program approval processes, periodic program review, assessment of student learning, and other forms of ongoing evaluation. These processes include: collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data; tracking learning results over time; using comparative data from external sources; and improving structures, services, processes, curricula, pedagogy, and learning results.

- Distance Education Policy
- Resource Guide to Program Review
- Substantive Change Policy; Substantive Change Manual

4.2 The institution has institutional research capacity consistent with its purposes and characteristics. Data are disseminated internally and externally in a timely manner, and analyzed, interpreted, and incorporated in institutional review, planning, and decision-making. Periodic reviews are conducted to ensure the effectiveness of institutional research function and the suitability and usefulness of the data generated.

Institutional Learning and Improvement

4.3 Leadership at all levels, including faculty, staff, and administration, is committed to improvement based on the results of inquiry, evidence, and evaluation. Assessment of teaching, learning, and the campus environment—in support of academic and co-curricular objectives—is undertaken, used for improvement, and incorporated into institutional

GUIDELINE: The institution has clear, well-established policies and practices for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting information that create a culture of evidence and improvement.

X CFR 2.2-2.6
planning processes.

4.4 The institution, with significant faculty involvement, engages in ongoing inquiry into the processes of teaching and learning, and the conditions and practices that ensure that the standards of performance established by the institution are being achieved. The faculty takes responsibility for evaluating the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes and uses the results for improvement of student learning and success. The findings from such inquiries are applied to the design and improvement of curricula, pedagogy, and assessment methodology.

GUIDELINE: Periodic analysis of grades and evaluation procedures are conducted to assess the rigor and effectiveness of grading policies and practices.

X CFR 2.2-2.6

4.5 Appropriate stakeholders, including alumni, employers, practitioners, students, and others designated by the institution, are regularly involved in the assessment and alignment of educational programs.

X CFR 2.6, 2.7

4.6 The institution periodically engages its multiple constituencies, including the governing board, faculty, staff, and others, in institutional reflection and planning processes that are based on the examination of data and evidence. These processes assess the institution’s strategic position, articulate priorities, examine the alignment of its purposes, core functions, and resources, and define the future direction of the institution.

X CFR 1.1, 3.4

4.7 Within the context of its mission and structural and financial realities, the institution considers changes that are currently taking place and are anticipated to take place within the institution and higher education environment as part of its planning, new program development, and resource allocation.

X CFR 1.1, 2.1, 3.4
Revisions to the Institutional Review Process

- All references to semesters were changed to weeks or months as appropriate (throughout Part III, pgs. 20-31)
- Clarified that the off-site review and visit team consists of the same individuals (pg. 20)
- The timing for the preparation workshop will be 15 months prior to an institution’s off-site review, not 15-18 months (pg. 21, 22)
- The time between the off-site review and accreditation visit will be 12 months. Institutions may request to have their accreditation visit 6 months after the off-site review if they wish. (pg. 21, 31)

Revisions to the First Section of Component 4 (page 26)

4: Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation (CFRs 2 2, 2 4, 2 6, 2 7, 4 3)

Institutions of higher education have a responsibility to document that students acquire knowledge and develop higher-order intellectual skills appropriate to the level of the degree earned. This documentation is a matter of validating institutional quality and providing accountability as well as setting the conditions for improvement of learning.

In the 2013 Handbook, CFR 2.2a states that baccalaureate programs must: “ensure the development of core competencies including, but not limited to, written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, and critical thinking.”

The institutional review process calls upon institutions to describe how the curriculum addresses each of the five core competencies, explain their learning outcomes in relation to those core competencies, and demonstrate, through evidence of student performance, the extent to which those outcomes are achieved. Institutions must ensure that, upon graduation, students have achieved a defined level of performance in these five core competencies. If they wish, institutions may create their own limited list of essential higher-order competencies beyond the five listed. They may also report student performance in majors or professional fields and in terms of institution-level learning outcomes that make the institution’s graduates distinctive.

The institution analyzes the evidence according to its own judgment, reports on student achievement of its learning outcomes in a way that makes sense for the institution (e.g., as a single score, or within ranges or qualitative categories), contextualizes the findings according to the mission and priorities of the institution, and formulates its own plans for improvement, if needed.

In all cases, for each core competency, the institution may set a specific level of performance expected at graduation, the institution defines the core competencies for itself, sets the standard of student performance expected for each at graduation, and gathers evidence of the achievement of that level of performance (which can be based on sampling) using the assessment methods of its choice.

The institution analyzes the evidence according to its own judgment, reports on levels of performance in a way that makes sense for the institution (e.g., as a single score, or within ranges or qualitative categories), contextualizes the findings according to the mission and priorities of the institution, and formulates its own plans for improvement, if needed.

The five core competencies listed in the Handbook are relevant in virtually any field of study, though different fields may define these outcomes in different ways and may also include other outcomes. At many institutions, it is the assessment of learning in the major or professional field that engages faculty and produces the most useful findings. Thus institutions may wish to embed assessment of core competencies in assessment of the major or professional field. Capstones, portfolios, research projects, signature assignments, internships, and comprehensive examinations provide rich evidence that can be
analyzed for multiple outcomes, both specialized and common to all programs, at a point close to graduation as determined by the institution. Whatever the expectations and findings, they need to be contextualized and discussed in this component of the institutional report.

It is the institution’s responsibility to set expectations for learning outcomes standards of performance at graduation that are appropriate to the institution’s mission, programs offered, student characteristics, and other criteria. The Commission is not seeking a minimum standard of performance that students would already meet upon entry or upon completion of lower-division general education courses. Nor does it seek outcomes at a level common to all institutions irrespective of mission. Rather, the Commission seeks learning outcomes a standard of performance and standards of performance that are appropriately ambitious, that faculty and students can take pride in, and that can be explained and demonstrated to external audiences. If a given competency is not a priority for the institution or a particular field of study, expectations may legitimately be lower. Within the context of the institution’s mission, the evaluation team then weighs the appropriateness of outcomes, student performance standards, and evidence of attainment.
## Revisions to the Glossary

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Revisions to Accreditation Redesign at a Glance
The *Implementing the 2013 Handbook of Accreditation* Timeline found on page 6 was revised in accordance with the changes made to component 4 of the Institutional Report found on page 26 of the draft *2013 Handbook of Accreditation (Revised November 2012).*

**Group 1:** Institutions work with at least one Core Competency. They define identify the learning outcomes related to that competency, identify standards of performance for graduates in that competency, assess their students’ performance, and identify areas for improvement. At the same time, they develop a plan for how they will approach the other four Core Competencies. The plan may also address other outcomes in areas of importance to the institution.

**Group 2:** Institutions work with at least three Competencies, following a plan developed earlier. In each Competency, students’ performance is assessed, results are analyzed, and areas that need improvement are identified. For at least one Competency, the institution has “closed the loop,” and implemented changes that have improved performance. For each competency, assessment may take place within a program or separately. At the same time, they develop a plan for how they will approach the other Core Competencies that have not yet been addressed.

**Group 3:** For all five Core Competencies, the institution has created a plan, identified the learning outcomes standards of performance at the institutional and/or program level, and implemented assessment. The institution is able to demonstrate where learning results have been improved; in areas where improvement is needed, steps are being taken. In all five Competencies, the institution is able to report to the extent to which the curriculum is achieving, with supporting evidence, the proportion of students achieving the desired learning outcomes standards of performance.