

Reports to the Commission

Preparation of a Progress Report | Preparation of a Progress Report With A Visit
 Preparation of the Midterm Report | Preparation of a Focused Midterm Report
 Preparation of a Focused Midterm Report with a Visit

PREPARATION OF A PROGRESS REPORT

A **Progress Report** is a report requested by the Commission for special purposes. It can occur at any time in the 6-year accreditation cycle. A Progress Report requires that the institution provide information, evidence, and analysis regarding the resolution of the issues to which it was directed by the Commission's Action Letter. The institution's report will be reviewed by the Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting, and the institution will be notified as to what action, if any, it must take next. The institution is required to send **three copies** of the report to the Commission **plus an electronic version**. The Progress Report must be reviewed by the Governing Board prior to its submission.

Use the following format for the report:

1. Cover Sheet Include the date of submission, the name and address of the institution, and a notation that this is a Progress Report.
2. Table of Contents
3. Statement on Report Preparation The statement, signed by the Chief Executive Officer of the institution, describes the process of report preparation and identifies those who were involved in its preparation, review, and approval.
4. Response to the Request of the Commission in the Action Letter Each recommendation identified by the Commission in its action letter should be identified and discussed. The report should describe the progress made on each recommendation, analyze the results achieved to date, provide evidence of the results, and indicate what additional plans the institution has developed.

Three copies of the report plus an electronic version should be sent to the Commission office at 1000 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949.

PREPARATION OF A PROGRESS REPORT WITH A VISIT

A **Progress Report** is a report requested by the Commission for special purposes. It can occur at any time in the 6-year accreditation cycle. A Progress Report requires that the institution provide information, evidence, and analysis regarding the resolution of the issues to which it was directed by the Commission's Action Letter. The institution's report will be reviewed by the Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting, and the institution will be notified as to what action, if any, it must take next. The institution is required to send **three copies** of the report to the Commission **plus an electronic version**. A copy should also be sent to each team member. The Progress Report must be reviewed by the Governing Board prior to its submission.

Visits accompanying Progress Reports are normally one-day visits by a team of two members, typically the chair of the comprehensive evaluation team familiar with the issues confronting the institution and a member of the Commission or Commission staff. The chair for this team is appointed by the Commission and agreed upon by the institution.

The purposes of the team conducting this visit are to:

- verify the accuracy and relevance of the report submitted by the college in response to the specific action of the Commission
- determine the extent to which the institution now meets the Commission standards cited in the recommendations
- report findings and recommendations to the Commission

Use the following format for the report:

1. Cover Sheet Include the date of submission, the name and address of the institution, and a notation that this is a Progress Report.
2. Table of Contents
3. Statement on Report Preparation The statement, signed by the Chief Executive Officer of the institution, describes the process of report preparation and identifies those who were involved in its preparation, review, and approval.
4. Response to the Request of the Commission in the Action Letter Each recommendation identified by the Commission in its action letter should be identified and discussed. The report should describe the resolution of each recommendation, analyze the results achieved to date, and indicate what additional plans the institution developed.

Three copies of the report plus an electronic version should be sent to the Commission office at Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949.

A copy of the report should also be sent to each team member.

PREPARATION OF THE MIDTERM REPORT

The **Midterm Report** is due in the third year following the evaluation team visit. The institution is expected to provide narrative information and analysis regarding the progress made on addressing:

- each of the recommendations of the evaluation team
- the areas identified in the planning agenda of its self study
- updates on substantive change approvals or pending proposals

The report will be reviewed by the Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting and the institution will be notified as to what action it must take next. The institution is required to send **two copies** of its report to the Commission **plus an electronic version**. **The Midterm Report must be reviewed by the Governing Board prior to its submission.**

Use the following format for the report:

1. Cover Sheet Include the date of submission, the name and address of the institution, and a notation that this is a Midterm Report.
2. Table of Contents
3. Statement on Report Preparation The statement, signed by the Chief Executive

Officer of the institution, describes the process of report preparation and identifies those who were involved in its preparation, review, and approval.

4. Response to Team Recommendations and the Commission Action Letter The report should describe the progress made on **each** recommendation, analyze the results achieved to date, provide evidence of the results, and indicate what additional plans the institution has developed.
5. Response to Self-identified Issues In the Planning Agenda section of the self study, the institution reports on areas needing improvement. The institution should provide a brief description of the progress made on these self-identified issues.
6. Update on Substantive Change in Progress, Pending, or Planned

Two copies of the report plus an electronic version should be sent to the Commission office at Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949.

PREPARATION OF A FOCUSED MIDTERM REPORT

The **Focused Midterm Report** is due in the third year following the evaluation team visit and is required whenever the Commission requests the regular Midterm Report focus on specific recommendations. The institution is expected to provide narrative information and analysis regarding the progress made on address:

- o each of the recommendations of the evaluation team demonstrating significant progress on those recommendations that were the subject of the focus as detailed in the Commission Action Letter
- o the areas identified in the planning agenda of its self study, and
- o updates on substantive change approvals or pending proposals.

The report will be reviewed by the Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting and the institution will be notified as to what action it must take next. The institution is required to send **three copies** of its report to the Commission **plus an electronic version**. The Focused Midterm Report must be reviewed by the Governing Board prior to its submission.

Use the following format for the report:

1. Cover Sheet Include the date of submission, the name and address of the institution, and a notation that this is a Focused Midterm Report.
2. Table of Contents
3. Statement on Report Preparation The statement, signed by the Chief Executive Officer of the institution, describes the process of report preparation and identifies those who were involved in its preparation, review, and approval.
4. Response to Team Recommendations and the Commission Action Letter The report should describe the progress made on each recommendation made by the visiting team, analyze the results achieved to date, provide evidence of the results, and indicate what additional plans the institution has developed. Significant progress should be demonstrated on those recommendations that were to be the subject of the focus report as detailed in the Action Letter.
5. Response to Self-identified Issues In the Planning Agenda section of the Self Study Report, the institution reported on areas needing improvement. The institution should provide a brief description of the progress made on these self-identified issues specifying timelines to completion and responsible parties.
6. Updates on Substantive Change Proposals in Progress, Pending, or Planned

Three copies of the report plus an electronic version should be sent to the Commission office at 10 Commercial Boulevard, Suite 204, Novato, CA 94949.

PREPARATION OF A FOCUSED MIDTERM REPORT WITH A VISIT

The **Focused Midterm Report** is due in the third year following the evaluation team visit and is required whenever the Commission requests the regular Midterm Report focus on specific recommendations. The institution is expected to provide narrative information and analysis regarding the progress made on address:

- o each of the recommendations of the evaluation team demonstrating significant progress on those recommendations that were the subject of the focus as detailed in the Commission Action Letter
- o the areas identified in the planning agenda of its self study report, and
- o updates on substantive change approvals or pending proposals.

The report will be reviewed by the Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting, and the institution will be notified as to what action it must take next. The institution is required to send **three copies** of its report to the Commission **plus an electronic version**. A copy should also be sent to each team member. **The Focus Midterm Report must be reviewed by the Governing Board prior to its submission.**

Visits accompanying Focused Midterm Reports are normally one-day visits by a team of two members, typically the chair of the comprehensive evaluation team familiar with the issues confronting the institution and a member of the Commission or Commission staff. The chair for this team is appointed by the Commission and agreed upon by the institution.

The purposes of the team conducting this visit are to:

- o verify the accuracy and relevance of the report submitted by the college in response to the specific action of the Commission
- o determine the extent to which the institution now meets the Commission standards cited in the recommendations
- o report findings and recommendations to the Commission

Use the following format for the report:

1. **Cover Sheet** Include the date of submission, the name and address of the institution, and a notation that this is a Focused Midterm Report.
2. **Table of Contents**
3. **Statement on Report Preparation** The statement, signed by the Chief Executive Officer of the institution, describes the process of report preparation and identifies those who were involved in its preparation, review, and approval.
4. **Response to Team Recommendations and the Commission Action Letter** The report should describe the progress made on **each** of the recommendations made by the visiting team, analyze the results achieved to date, provide evidence of the results, and indicate what additional plans the institution has developed. Significant progress should be demonstrated on those recommendations that were to be the subject of the focused report as detailed in the Action Letter.
5. **Response to Self-identified Issues** In the Planning Agenda section of the self study, the institution reported on areas needing improvement. The institution should provide a brief description of the progress made on these self-identified issues specifying timelines to completion and responsible parties.
6. **Updates on Substantive Change Proposals in Progress, Pending, or Planned**

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A copy of the report should also be sent to each team member.

FAQs on Accreditation | FAQs on Substantive Change

Frequently Asked Questions About Accreditation*Q. What is accreditation?*

A. Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution that has been found to meet or exceed state criteria of educational quality. Institutions voluntarily seek accreditation, and it is conferred by non-government bodies.

Accreditation has two fundamental purposes:

- to assure the quality of the institution, and
- to encourage institutional improvement.

Accreditation of an institution by an institutional accrediting body certifies to general public that the institution

- has appropriate purposes;
- has the resources needed to accomplish its purposes;
- can demonstrate that it is accomplishing its purposes; and
- gives reason to believe it will continue to accomplish its purposes.

Q. How does the Commission determine if an institution meets accreditation standards?

A. An institution seeking initial accreditation prepares an extensive report on itself based on the criteria set forth in the document on Eligibility Requirements for Accreditation. This period of extensive self study is followed by an on-site visit by a team of peers selected by the Commission. Based on its findings, the team makes a recommendation to the Commission regarding the accreditation status of the institution. The team will recommend denial, further candidacy, or initial accreditation. The Commission then acts to determine accreditation status, communicating its decision to the institution. Once accredited, an institution is expected to comply with the eligibility requirements and accreditation criteria continuously and must be evaluated periodically.

Q. How often are colleges evaluated?

A. Colleges maintain accreditation through continuous adherence to accreditation criteria as set forth by the Commission. Colleges follow a six-year cycle during which institutional review is continuous. These reviews include an Annual Report, an Annual Fiscal Report, a Midterm Report, completion of a comprehensive institutional self study, and an evaluation review by a team of peers. The Commission frequently requests other reports.

Q. Do colleges ever lose accreditation?

A. Loss of accreditation occurs infrequently. Commission practices, which include periodic institutional self study, peer evaluation, and Commission action, are designed to foster education excellence and continuous improvement at each institution. The processes of peer evaluation and follow-up offer support and guidance to institutions that need to improve practice in order to meet accreditation standards or policy requirements. Most institutions are able to correct any errant practices and retain institutional accreditation.

However, the primary purpose of accreditation is quality assurance to the public. Termination signals the

Commission believes the institution lacks sufficient quality to be accredited. The Commission may terminate accreditation if an institution has taken action that places it significantly out of compliance with Commission standards or has not satisfactorily explained or corrected matters of which it has been given notice. Termination of accreditation is subject to a request for review and appeal. The institution's accredited status (including the sanction last issued by the Commission) continues pending completion of any review or appeal that is filed.

Q. What are the benefits of accreditation?

A. Accreditation provides both tangible and intangible benefits:

- It certifies to the public that an institution meets or exceeds specific standards of quality;
- It facilitates institutional eligibility to participate in Title IV student financial aid programs; and
- It provides a process of periodic self and peer review.

These activities are a positive force in improving institutional effectiveness. Many institutions rely in part on regional accreditation in their decisions to recognize transfer credit.

Q. Does accreditation mean that credits and degrees can transfer to another institution?

A. While it is typically true that many institutions recognize transfer credits only from regionally accredited institutions, the basic principle underlying issues of transfer is that each institution is responsible for determining its own policies and practices in regard to transfer and award of credit. The Commission requires that institutions have a policy on transfer of credit by which the institution certifies that courses accepted for credit from sending institutions achieve student learning outcomes comparable to its own courses.

Q. Does the Commission rank colleges?

A. Since each college is unique and has its own mission, the Commission does not rank colleges. The responsibility of the Commission is to accredit colleges based on standards of good practice in higher education.

Q. Can the Commission recommend a college to a student?

A. The Commission does not recommend colleges. Specific information about colleges can be located in the reference books found in libraries. Other valuable sources of information are high school or college counselors and advisors, or college admissions officers.

Q. What happens to a student's records when a college closes?

A. Commission policy states that when a college is closing, all academic, financial aid, and other records should be prepared for permanent filing. The college should arrange with the state department of higher education, an appropriate agency, or another college or university for the filing of student records. Notification regarding the location of records and their accessibility should be sent to all students, including where possible, a copy of the student's record.

Q. Who evaluates the Commission?

A. The Commission is authorized by the U.S. Department of Education as a reliable agency of accreditation and must go through a periodic review process. ACCJC is also recognized by the Council of Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), a non-profit organization of colleges and universities, which recognizes, coordinates, and periodically reviews the work of its member accrediting bodies and the appropriateness of existing or proposed accrediting bodies and their activities.

Frequently Asked Questions About Substantive Change.

Q. What is the purpose of the Commission's Substantive Change Policy?

A. ACCJC's Substantive Change Policy is long-standing, first adopted in 1972 and revised several times since. Many of those revisions have been motivated by the changes to the Education (USDE) regulations; others have been developed through the Commission's policy review procedures. In the last few years, the Commission has developed and circulated a *Substantive Change Manual* designed to inform member institutions of the process seeking substantive change approval.

The area of substantive change is of particular concern to the USDE which sets the requirements of recognize accreditors and of institutions that participate in federal financial aid programs. The USDE regulations are driven by concerns that have emerged with particular kinds of institutions, and in the case of substantive change it is fair to say the USDE's concerns stem from those institutions that have (in the past) rapidly developed new programs of questionable quality, and then closed those programs abruptly or even become insolvent due to the costs of such new programs relative to the revenue these programs generated. The USDE has steadily expanded requirements of accreditors regarding substantive change review as a result of the emerging concerns and the subsequent impact on students.

Q. What are the kinds of institutional changes that require the approval of the ACCJC Substantive Change Committee?

A. The *Substantive Change Manual*, available on line at www.accjc.org under Core Documents and Publications clearly details the kinds of institutional changes that will require prior approval by the Substantive Change Committee. These include: a change in the mission, scope, or name of the institution (including change in degree level offered); a change in the nature of the constituency served (including closure); a change in the location or geographical area served (including establishing or closing an additional location or center); a change in the control of the institution (including merger with another institution or a change by a parent institution of one off-campus sites or centers into a separate institution); a change in credit awarded; a change in courses or programs or their mode of delivery that represent a significant departure from current practice (including addition of new courses/programs); as well as other significant changes.

Q. What if a particular institutional change is not covered by the criteria set forth in the Manual?

A. Should an institution discover that a projected change is not described in the examples above or in the Manual it should contact ACCJC staff for clarification. (Dr. Owyang can be reached at lowyang@comcast.net). Institutions should remember that institutional accreditation is extended to the institution, and not to a particular program. Consequently, everything conducted under the name of the institution is subject to the Standards of Accreditation.

Q. How often does the Committee meet, and how can institutions participate in the review of its application?

A. In the past two years with the increase of substantive change proposals, the Committee has tried to adhere to a schedule of monthly meetings. Institutions are urged to contact the Substantive Change staff for scheduling their application. When applications are complete, the staff member will provide the list of names and addresses of Committee members where applications should be sent. Completed applications with supporting documentation need to be received by Committee members no later than one month before the scheduled review.

Normally, when an institutional substantive change is scheduled for review, the institutional representatives will be contacted by the ACCJC staff member about the date and time of the review. Institutional representatives are invited to participate in a telephone conference call with members of the Committee to respond to any questions or needs for clarification that the Committee might have. Since these conference calls are limited in time, institutions are urged to select those representatives who can speak directly to the specifics of the application and its content.

Q. How long does the approval process take from submission of the substantive change proposal application until Committee review and action?

A. The Commission has given the Substantive Change Committee, a committee of Commissioners, the authority to act on its behalf for requests that require the approval for substantive change. Normally, after a substantive change proposal has been reviewed, staff will inform the institution via e-mail within 48 hours of the Committee's action. A formal letter follows within 2-4 weeks. There will be instances when the Committee might wish to defer its decision for full Commission action. In that event, final action will take place at the next scheduled meeting of the Commission. The institution will be informed in every case. A list of the Substantive Change Committee meeting dates and deadlines for submission of documentation is provided in this newsletter and on the ACCJC website.

Q. Are there particular kinds of applications that receive favorable Committee action more than others?

A. There is no one kind of application that will receive favorable Committee action over any others. In general, the Committee makes its decision based on the specifics of the institutional change that is being proposed and the accompanying information submitted with the application. It is important to stress that complete proposals with sufficient supporting data and documentation are less likely to experience a delay in Committee review and action. When an application is incomplete or lacks sufficient data and documentation, the Committee will seek additional information and table its decision until the next scheduled meeting of the Committee.

Q. Are there ways by which institutions can assure that applications submitted are sufficiently complete?

A. The staff member responsible for facilitating the substantive change process will review drafts of the proposal prior to the actual submission of the application if contacted early enough in the process. Applications should be mailed to the Committee members at least one month prior to the Committee meeting (*see below*). Consequently, if drafts need to be reviewed prior to the meeting, institutions are requested to plan accordingly. In every case, the institution remains responsible for the information submitted in the application.

Substantive Change Committee Meeting Schedule

Institutions seeking substantive change must submit complete documents to the Commission office **one month** before the Committee meeting. Results of the Committee action will be transmitted first via email notification to the Accreditation Liaison Officer and second via formal letter from the ACCJC President.

Spring 2006

February 17

March 17

April 21

May 19