

Procedures for the Biennial Review of Candidate Status

Nature of the Biennial Review

The purpose of the biennial review during candidacy is to determine if the institution continues to meet the Commission's Criteria for Candidacy and is making reasonable progress toward accreditation. At the time candidacy is granted, the Commission specifies future monitoring, including a date for an evaluation for initial accreditation and, typically, a biennial report and focused evaluation at the midpoint to initial accreditation. At its discretion, the Commission may indicate that only a report is required.

Preparation of the Institution's Biennial Report

In order that the institution's preparation for biennial review may be more productive than burdensome, the Commission specifies that the report be an updating of the self-study submitted for the institution's candidacy application. The institution should consider the biennial review a phase of its planning process, an opportunity to measure its progress toward meeting the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation*. If the institution's biennial self-assessment is effective, the self-study it must prepare for initial accreditation will be essentially an updating of its biennial report.

The most useful biennial report will therefore be both a progress report and a planning document, addressing each of the Commission's *Standards for Accreditation* as well as its *Criteria for Candidacy*. Like the self-study for candidacy, the report should be a comprehensive and coherent narrative accompanied by the required supportive materials. Where progress has occurred, it should be documented. Where problems remain, plans for their solution should be detailed.

Procedures for the Focused Evaluation (if specified)

For the biennial review, the process for scheduling the visit and appointing the evaluation team is essentially the same as that for the candidacy application. Two to four team members, spending three days on campus, will examine materials, conduct interviews, and present an oral preview of their report. The institution makes arrangements in advance for the team and communicates regularly with the team members. For this focused evaluation, a preliminary visit by the team chair may be considered optional but is highly recommended. If necessary, the preliminary visit of the team chair may be conducted virtually.

Preparation of the Visiting Team's Report

The steps in the preparation of the report and distribution are the same as those prescribed for other evaluation reports, and the institution will, of course, be asked to provide to the Commission a written response to the team's report.

The chair is asked to use the following format for the report:

- a. Cover Page
 - See *Evaluation Manual*
- b. Preface Page (Complete form provided by the Commission office.)
- c. Introduction
 - brief summary of purpose and format of visit;
 - basic information about institution: date of degree authority, range of degree authority, date of first degrees awarded, if any, type of control, FTE enrollment and other data on student body).
- d. Narrative

The report should provide an appraisal of the institution's success in enhancing strengths and correcting weaknesses identified during the evaluation for candidacy as well as the extent to which the institution has otherwise made progress in fulfilling each of the Criteria for Candidacy:

1. compliance with each of the *Requirements of Affiliation*;
 2. accomplishment of immediate educational objectives;
 3. current institutional fulfillment and plans to comply with each of the *Standards for Accreditation*;
 4. compliance with standard on *Integrity, Transparency, and Public Disclosure*.
- e. Summative List of Institutional Strengths and Weaknesses, related specifically to the Criteria for Candidacy and the institution's ability to achieve accreditation.

The team chair will send directly to the Commission the confidential recommendation on continuation or withdrawal of candidate status.

Commission Action on Biennial Review

Biennial reports (with no visit) are reviewed by the Commission during the semester they are submitted. Biennial focused evaluations are reviewed by the Commission during the semester following the visit.

A Commission decision to continue candidate status is final; action to withdraw is subject to the due process statement then in effect.

The Commission will specify in its notification letter the date by which the institution may apply for initial accreditation.

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